

**MILITARY CHAPLAINS'**

**REVIEW**

**1979**











# Military Chaplains' Review

Theology and the Arts

DA Form 165-121

Spring, 1979

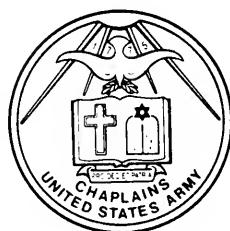




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**Theology and the Arts**

**DA Pam 165-121  
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## PREFACE

The *Military Chaplains' Review* is designed as a medium in which those interested in the military chaplaincy can share with chaplains the product of their experience and research. We welcome articles which are directly concerned with supporting and strengthening chaplains professionally. Preference will be given to those articles having lasting value as reference material.

The *Military Chaplains' Review* is published quarterly. The opinions reflected in each article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the view of the Chief of Chaplains or the Department of the Army. When used in this publication, the terms "he," "him," and "his" are intended to include both the masculine and feminine genders; any exceptions to this will be so noted.

Articles should be submitted in duplicate, double spaced, to the Editor, Military Chaplains' Review, United States Army Chaplain Board, Fort Wadsworth, Staten Island, N.Y. 10305. Articles should be approximately 8 to 18 pages in length and, when appropriate, should be carefully footnoted. Detailed editorial guidelines are available from the editor on request.

## EDITOR

Chaplain (LTC) John J. Hoogland May 1971 — June 1974

Chaplain (LTC) Joseph E. Galle III July 1974 — September 1976

Chaplain (LTC) Rodger R. Venzke October 1976 —

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The following is a list of the names of the persons who have been elected to the office of the President of the United States, and the names of the persons who have been elected to the office of the Vice President of the United States, in the year 1800.

Year	President	Vice President
1800	Thomas Jefferson	Aaron Burr
1804	Thomas Jefferson	George Clinton
1808	James Madison	George Clinton
1812	James Madison	Elbridge Gerry
1816	James Monroe	James Smith
1820	James Monroe	James Monroe
1824	James Monroe	James Monroe
1828	James Monroe	James Monroe
1832	James Monroe	James Monroe
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1896	James Monroe	James Monroe
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## Renewing the Call of Bezalel

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“I believe, along with Keats,” says composer/conductor Leonard Bernstein, “that the Poetry of Earth is never dead, as long as spring succeeds winter, and man is there to perceive it.” The Spring Issue seems appropriate for our look at “Theology and the Arts”—it is the artist who finds expression for our faith, who brings beauty and life out of seemingly dead and dreary dogma. The emergence of his contributions is as necessary and refreshing as our cyclical seasons. So Moses directed the attention of his people to the artisan, Bezalel, and emphasized that his work was a divine calling and he was filled with the Spirit of God. (Ex. 35:30ff)

We are extremely grateful to the talented contributors to this edition. We know how difficult it has been for many of them. Asking an artist to write about his work is like asking someone to explain a joke; moods and emotions lose their impact when reduced to examination. “It is very good advice,” says the painter, David Hockney, “to believe only what the artist does rather than what he says about his work.”

Still, there is value in emphasizing the call of Bezalel—in being reminded that the artist can be a relevant theologian. To respond to a Being whose essence is Love, after all, requires more than cold logic and reason. We hope the articles which follow will stimulate new avenues through which the people you serve can express their faith.

Finally, I want to express my personal thanks to MSG William R. Lucks who assisted in planning and securing the authors for this issue. What follows is not only exemplary of his interests but also of his personal contribution to our Branch and his MOS during 3½ years with the Army Chaplain Board. Bill has ministered with us and to us. He is representative of the finest among Chapel Activities Specialists. Like Bezalel, whose calling we often forget, his service will continue to quietly enrich us all.

**ORRIS E. KELLY**

Chaplain (Major General), USA  
Chief of Chaplains

# Renewing the Spirit

188

I believe, strong and true,  
that the power of the  
written and the spoken  
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Articles	Page
The New Spiritual Awakening Grant Spradling .....	1
Worth Doing William Conrad Severson .....	9
The Clown—Another Fool for Christ’s Sake Floyd T. Shaffer .....	15
Vitalizing Worship with Dance Doug Adams .....	23
As Clay in the Potter’s Hands Majory Zoet Bankson .....	31
More Than Just Play—Reflections on Leisure Dr. Albert R. Elliott .....	41
My Journey Pats H. Hanner .....	47
The Spiritual Benefits of Poetry William Brower .....	51
Creative Music: An Artful Aid to Worship MSG Lester B. Gibbs .....	57
Puppetry and a Return to Wonder Sister Adelaide Ortegel .....	63
American Jewish Theatre Norman J. Fedder .....	71
Musical Mortar Mary Lu Walker .....	79
The Renewed Spirit of Drama in the Church—the Christian Perspective Wilma Douglas Ringstrom .....	85
Book Reviews .....	93
Index .....	99

Journal of the  
American Psychological Association  
Vol. 10, No. 1  
Spring 1904

The New Psychology  
of the Future

John Dewey

The Growth of  
Thought

William James

As Children See the World

More Than Just a  
Theory

My Journal

The Spirit of the  
Age

Creative Art

Supporting the  
Cause

America's  
Future

Materialism

The Psychology of  
the Future

For the  
Future



# The New Spiritual Awakening

Grant Spradling

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By now it is hardly news that many Americans find traditional religious life inadequate. The pundits point to the increased popularity of sects and cults as well as the flourishing of the human potential as evidence of a dissatisfaction with traditional religious form. The Hare Krishna movement, astrology, EST and bio-feedback are readily recognized as substitute religions. But there are other, less bizarre—and I think more healthy—indications that vast segments of our society are feeling their internal lives to be inadequately nourished by traditional forms. These symptoms are largely unrecognized for their religious significance. This unrecognized is because the vocabulary of religious leadership has not in recent history dealt with the contemporary arts' phenomenon. The little thought we have given to the arts rarely takes in account the revolution that the arts have undergone in the last fifteen years. In considering the new arts' explosion, most often religious thinkers look wistfully to the European Renaissance; and what we are experiencing is quite a different matter.

"The United States is in the midst of one of the most profound spiritual awakenings in its history and doesn't quite know it," states James Buell in a recent article in the *DePauw Alumnus*.<sup>1</sup> Potters' wheels are spinning, weavers are busy at their looms as in no time since the Industrial Revolution. A major factor in the current cultural/religious life of the United States is the extraordinary amount and quality of art being generated, and some of the most gratifying forms of art are those involving our hands and our bodies—the tactile arts and dancing. The evidence is abundant, but as Buell goes on in his article, "... it hasn't been recognized as a spiritual awakening because its vocabulary isn't that of religion and much of it is taking place outside traditional religious institutions."<sup>2</sup>

Religious leaders are reluctant to engage the arts because of the

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<sup>1</sup> "A Warming of the Spirit," *DePauw Alumnus*, Vol. 43, No. 3, Greencastle, Indiana.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

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Grant Spradling, a minister of the United Church of Christ, is Executive Director of Religious Communities for the Arts (RCFA) and also serves as Arts Consultant to the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries. He has also been the director of an arts center, the Executive Director of the Christian Society for Drama, and a professional performer in summer stock and Broadway. Prior to his present position, he was a member of the Metropolitan Opera Studio.

sibling rivalry between religion and the arts. Theodore Gill has said that the relationship between arts and religion is "abysmal." He explains that in the abyss, before either religion or art were conscious endeavors, religion and art were one. Especially in the last 300 years the relationship has been an ambivalent one. When there has been an engagement between arts and religion, the arts have usually been subordinated to the role of "hand-maiden of religion."

At this point it may be useful to look back to the beginnings of the culture of the people now living in the United States. I am keenly aware of the rich fabric of subcultures that weave together to make up the dominant culture within this country, and I am also aware that many of our subcultures differ radically from one another. Nevertheless, I believe the case can be made that an old Anglo-European culture has played a major role in shaping the esthetic life throughout our country. This role is major even in the Southwest where Spanish and Native American cultures predate the Anglo-European influences as it spread from the Atlantic coast.

It was the 16th-18th century English Protestant tradition which shaped a domination of our culture, the consequences of which are only now becoming apparent. John Dillenger states in his essay, "Faith and Sensibility," that "... the 16th-18th century English Protestant had all the earmarks of a linguistic, hearing culture in which the eyes were directed by being told what to see. Such a clarifying power of language produced a significant literature, molded theology totally by language, but narrowed the horizons of visual perception. Seeing was not a mode of learning to be trusted in its own right."<sup>3</sup>

Wesley A. Hotchkiss, in his recent article "Lines and Circles", puts it another way. "The difference between us and the third world is a difference of symbols. For us Western, technological and rationalistic people, our symbol is the line. A scientific method is linear. We move from fact to fact by empirical observation and experimentation. In this linear process knowledge is cumulative, moving from hypothesis to laws of nature. In the societal realm, this is the concept of progress."<sup>4</sup>

Our vocabulary for addressing the esthetic realm is inadequate, imprecise and often esoteric. This inadequacy is not the fault of the language, for we have the marvelous facility to enlarge and to bring into usage words and concepts that are regarded as important. The abundant resources we have for dealing with the rational realm and the meager resources for communicating about the non-rational realm are symptoms of "where our heads have been."

Not long ago I was talking with a painter friend who was perplexed about his inability to communicate with the bureaucracy and I showed him

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<sup>3</sup> "Faith and Sensibility" *Journal of Current Social Issues* (287 Park Avenue South, NY), Vol. 15, No. 3, 1978, pp. 65.

<sup>4</sup> "Lines and Circles," *Journal of Current Social Issues*, Vol. 15, No. 3, 1978, p. 12.

the following list of characteristics describing those people who are right side dominated. The list appears in *The Three Boxes of Life* by Richard N. Bolles. Bolles says the right side of the brain:

- Demands ready integration of many inputs at once.
- Processes information more diffusely.
- Has a nonlinear and simultaneous mode of operation.
- Deals with space.
- Responsible for gestures, facial and body movements, tone of voice, etc.
- Responsible for spatial and relational functions;  
awareness of one's own body, for sports and dancing; our orientation in space; recognition of faces, crafts, artistic endeavor; musical ability and recognition of pitch.
- Specializes in memory and recognition of objects,  
persons and places, music, etc.
- Normally tends to specialize in intuition and holistic  
perception or thinking.
- The seat of passion and of dreams.
- The crucial side of the brain for artists, craftspeople  
and musicians.<sup>5</sup>

As he ran down the list, he looked up in amazement that his own personality could be so accurately delineated as right side dominant. A right side dominated person clearly was concerned with symbol, for the visual; but the one characteristic missing is that of high verbal skills. I then suggested to him that Western culture is dominated by those who have high verbal skills, while those with low verbal skills are usually consigned to physical labor—the exceptions being the artist and the inventor.

We have a veritable arsenal of words to deal with the realm of the objective, rational, technical, cognitive, scientific, empirical—qualities of the left side of the brain; and we tend to know what we mean by these words. By contrast, our vocabulary to address the realm of the arts and religion is neither so accurate nor are we so sure that we understand what one another means in the area of the subjective, intuitive, spiritual, esthetic, transcendent, artistic, cultural—qualities of the right side of the brain.

The Anglo-European world view was shaped largely by empirical reasoning. That world view brought us the democratic political revolution and the Industrial Revolution which reached its height on these shores in the 19th century. But that same mode of thinking, left in the dead hands of the past, controls our cultural life. The spiritual/esthetic part of reality was left to the vestiges of aristocracy—the educated, the travelled and the wealthy and, on the other hand, to powerless dreamers and mystics. The portion of reality that fascinated those in domination was that portion

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<sup>5</sup>Richard N. Bolles, *The Three Boxes of Life* (Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press), p. 96.

which could be utilized to create effective systems of government and management and bring more rational understanding of nature.

In *Coming to Our Senses*, an author helps us fantasize what American culture would be like had it not been Puritans who founded Plymouth colony.

Suppose that our first colonists in the opening decades of the seventeenth century had *not* been Puritans from England. What if they had set forth from Rome or Florence or Venice bringing the culture of the Italian-Renaissance to our shores? Brought up in the golden glow of the Vatican or the Medicis and doges who surrounded themselves with the greatest painters, sculptors, and artificers of the day, suppose they had watched princes pass by to participate in dazzling entertainments in courtyards lighted by a thousand torches; suppose they had listened to strains of Monteverdi, jammed a sunlit square to laugh at the commedia dell'arte's latest horseplay, lapped up amazing rumors concerning the most recent findings of Galileo.

Or suppose that from the courts of James I or Charles I had come a band of settlers who recalled the sumptuous masques in Whitehall fashioned by the great architect Inigo Jones, with texts by the poet Ben Johnson, and their ears still rang with Christopher Marlowe's "mighty line" and Shakespeare's "If music be the food of love, play on." What if these high-spirited achievements had been the marks of our origin?

This line of speculation, however, need not detain us much longer. For, of course, the fact is that among the traditionally accepted "marks of their origin," Americans find no traces of masques at court, of dance or theatre, no strains of poetry or music (save that in the psalmbook). Massachusetts in the 1620s and the 1630s was colonized by no band of lively and cultivated adventurers but by folk who had fled their native land to get away from just these elements of life; by men and women for whom sweet strains of music, dance, and the stage, the works of the painter and the jeweler and the maker of tapestries were an abomination. They brought to these shores the Reformation, not the Renaissance, and the gray shadow of John Calvin stretched across their stern and rockbound coast.<sup>6</sup>

As we enter the Post-Industrial era, the arts are taking on an added significance for society. Because the arts express or nourish our interior life as no other human endeavor apart from religion, the arts must be a priority concern for religious leadership. There is also the growing sense that we are fast approaching the limit of the capacity of technology to provide increased satisfaction and "the good life." Some will say we have already outrun technology's positive benefits, and even the scientist is often a vocal critic of the rationalistic approach.

The liberation of the 1960s and growing disenchantment with the capacity of traditional modes combine to motivate individuals to take matters in their own hands. Society has not waited for scholars and political leaders to tell what has happened and to invent solutions. In the absence of a satisfying theological and cultic life within traditional forms, many within our society are searching for new, often exotic forms. We need not belabor the fact that some of the paths taken recently led to horrible consequences. It seems, however, that the arts, particularly folk arts and

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<sup>6</sup> *Coming to Our Senses* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1977), pp. 14-16.

crafts, provide a rewarding and imaginative option to pseudo-religious forms. The enormous growth in interest in folk art and crafts may be one of the healthiest and most hopeful signs of our time.

Here, I would like to narrow my discussion of the arts' phenomenon to the increased enthusiasm for the tactile arts and body movement. While I do not deal with athletics in this article, I believe that the desire to participate in many forms of athletics comes from the same motivation that causes others to dance.

The explosion of disco dancing is evidence enough of increased use of body movement for satisfaction. In addition, numbers of modern dance companies have quadrupled over the last 10 years and audiences for dance performances have become among the largest for performing arts. Except for the damage that may be done to hearing, disco dancing is a healthy and nearly total esthetic experience. There is one significant experience absent in the disco scene. It is the possibility to communicate verbally. Anyone who has visited a disco will confirm that talking is nearly impossible. The observer will also note the creativity and often great beauty of the individually choreographed movements. Less spectacular but also widespread is the increased interest in modern dance as a form of sacred dance. Folk dance continues to be a source of satisfaction for many people.

What links body movement to the tactile arts is that both are nonverbal and noncognitive. In addition, both draw for their media upon the most familiar and accessible resources. The dancer's medium is his or her own body. What could be more familiar and accessible? The tactile artist—the weaver, the potter, the woodworker, the breadmaker—also draws upon those everyday resources that are satisfyingly familiar.

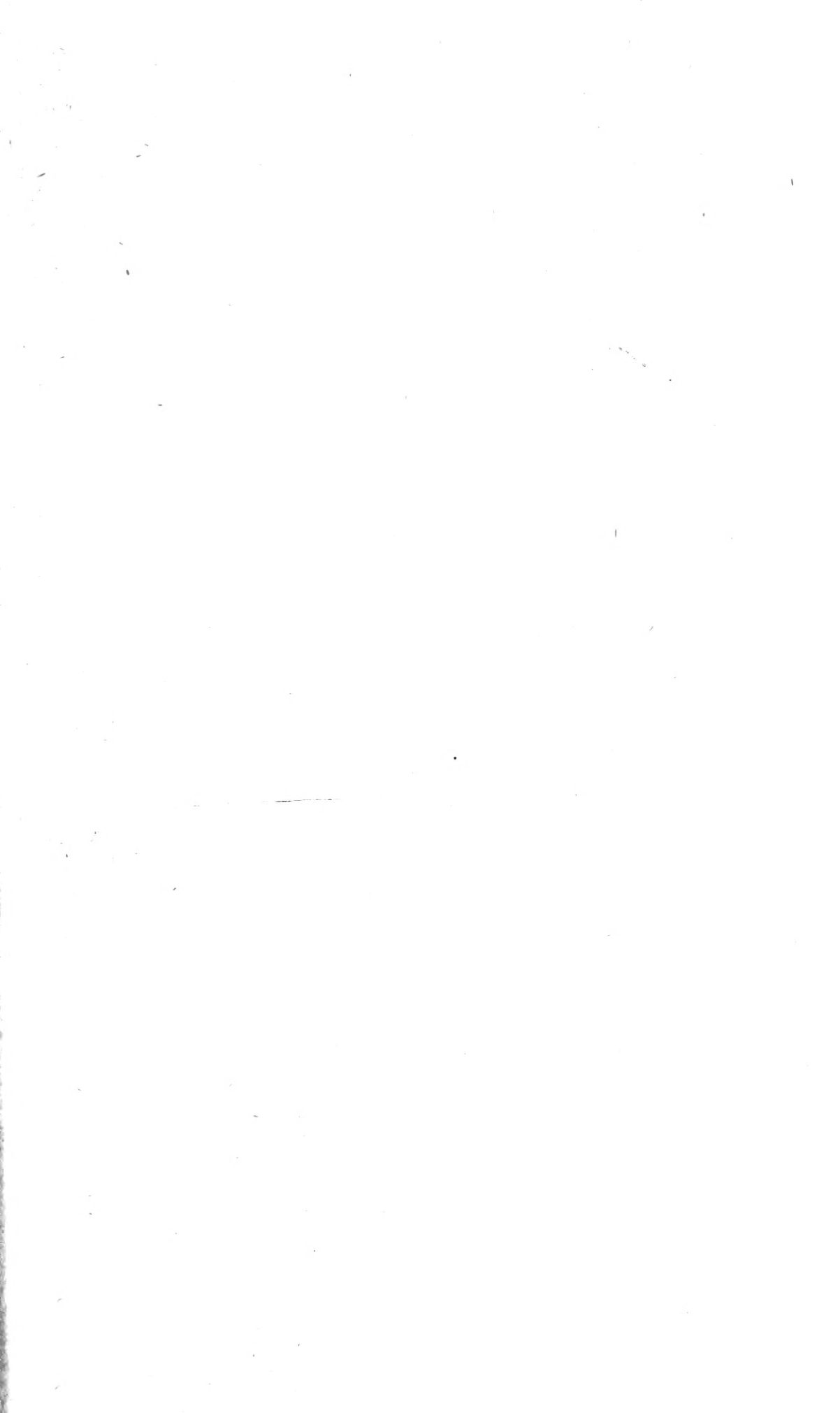
Very little of our theological thinking has been rooted in American culture. Until very recently, most exciting theological ideas could be traced to European origins. Liberation theology, springing out of Brazil, and the fresh perceptions brought by women theologians and the Black church may bode well for theological vision more meaningful to the children of the new world. But today we turn more to cultural anthropologists and social observers to tell us what the people are thinking than we do to theologians. It is from popular wisdom we are beginning to synthesize our religious modes for the post-industrial, post-Anglo-European dominated era.

Because the language and even the ideological tools are too enmeshed in the rational, technological mode, the people are reaching to primal sources of expression—feeling, touch, body movement. It is as if ancient religious instinct has informed some of the sensitive among us to reach down into the mud and begin to shape it again—to shape wood, to weave straw and fiber, to stamp and dance on the earth. Some intuition has caused many among us to return to the ancient acts that predate myths for a sense of meaning. The abstract designs that emerge organically from the swirling of the clay, the warp and woof of the loom, the grain of the wood, the texture of the bread and the movement of the body give satisfaction to the unsophisticated among us as well as the sophisticated.

This return to primal esthetic activity is healthy and will help us find the satisfactions that precede meaning in our own place and time. There are not many charlatans, quacks or hucksters involved in this esthetic pursuit because the same intuition that moves us to these activities also enables us to recognize and reject the inauthentic. Wesley Hotchkiss has stated in a recent *Journal of Current Social Issues*, "I have the intuitive feeling that the post-Reformation theology may not be written at all. It is already being painted, sculpted, danced, performed and crafted."<sup>7</sup> One of the most hopeful signs of our time is the instinctive return to primal sources and the discovery that there remains resident within us the capacity to form shapes that assuage our lostness and fill our life with gentle satisfaction.

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<sup>7</sup> "Lines and Circles," p. 14.





**SYNERGISM by Sculptors William Severson & Saunders Schultz**

Located at the Mercantile Center in downtown St. Louis, this 1700-cubic-foot, mirror-finished sculpture of stainless steel, two stories tall, captures images and actions in its environment. It accumulates and focuses them to suggest the synergistic natural/technological whole.



# Worth Doing

William Conrad Severson

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What is worth doing in art? A simple enough question, yet we spent many long hours struggling for answers at the ECDA\* Conference at Colorado Springs in July, 1977. My seminar was called "Concept Art."

As a sculptor practicing professionally across the United States, designing for a project in Riyadh, the seeking of concepts worthy of expression in the fine arts is a real and urgent task. Sandy\*\* and I discovered early in our careers that beautiful art, styles to be in vogue, was often art only skin deep. We soon learned that our art must be culturally and physically integrated into its environment. We early found our deepest satisfaction is in joining with our clients in a search for values they hold to be important enough to express in the visual art form. Then we seek to execute these elements in the finest art form possible.

The search is a dynamic of great meaning for us and the client. We feel our finest works are the result of much exploration and deep thought. Often the client may be a religious organization; but as a rule, groups of people employ our art in their corporate lives.

The Teamsters' Joint Council 13 was our client for one of our most important religious works—"Finite/Infinite," a twenty-seven story brick sculpture. For Ralston Purina, which has gone far beyond its origins as a "feed store," the search led to artistic expression of their expanded role of Protein Resourcer and Utilizer. Our heroic scale (52' x 17") glass bas relief of flowing water became the expression for the First Baptist Church in Little Rock. A stainless steel strongbox for the Ark, mirroring and including all who relate to it, was the result of that dynamic search for a meaning worthy of art expression at B'nai El Temple in St. Louis County.

Hence the title "Concept Art" for the Air Force Academy summer conference in Colorado Springs. Colonel James Townsend, then Chaplain for the Academy, had attended the previous ECDA meeting at Scarritt

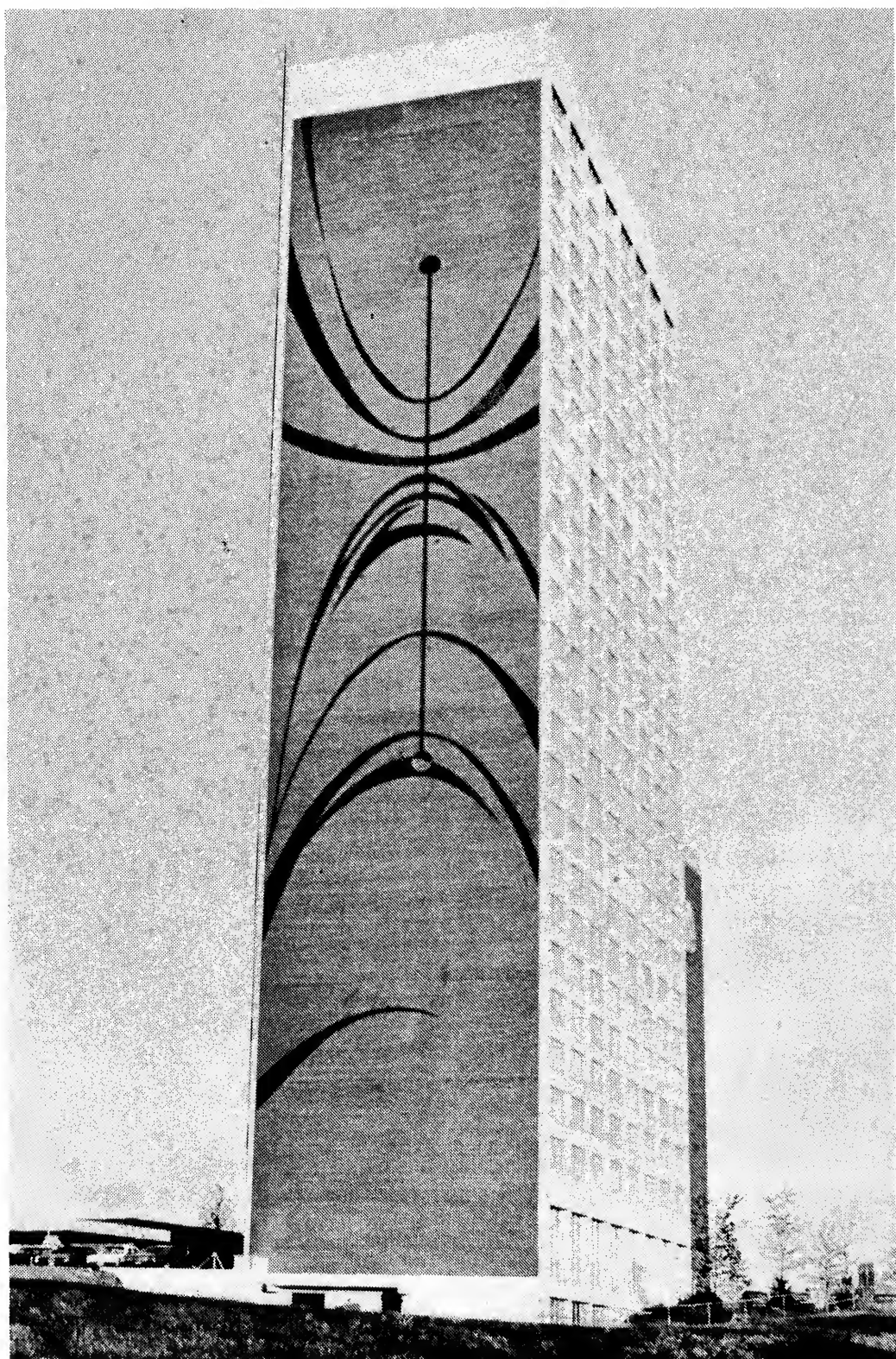
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\* Ecumenical Council for Drama and Arts

\*\* My artist associate, Saunders Schultz

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William Conrad Severson is a noted American sculptor. He is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin and holds a Master of Fine Arts degree from Syracuse University. He and his associate, Saunders Schultz, recently exhibited jointly on Fordham University's Robert Moses Plaza at Lincoln Center in New York City, "Sculpture in Architectural Context."



**FINITE/INFINITE by Sculptors William Severson and Saunders Schultz**

A carved brick bas relief, 269 feet tall symbolizing God reaching down to man and man reaching up for but a touch of the divine. (Teamsters Council Plaza Retirement Center, St. Louis, MO.)

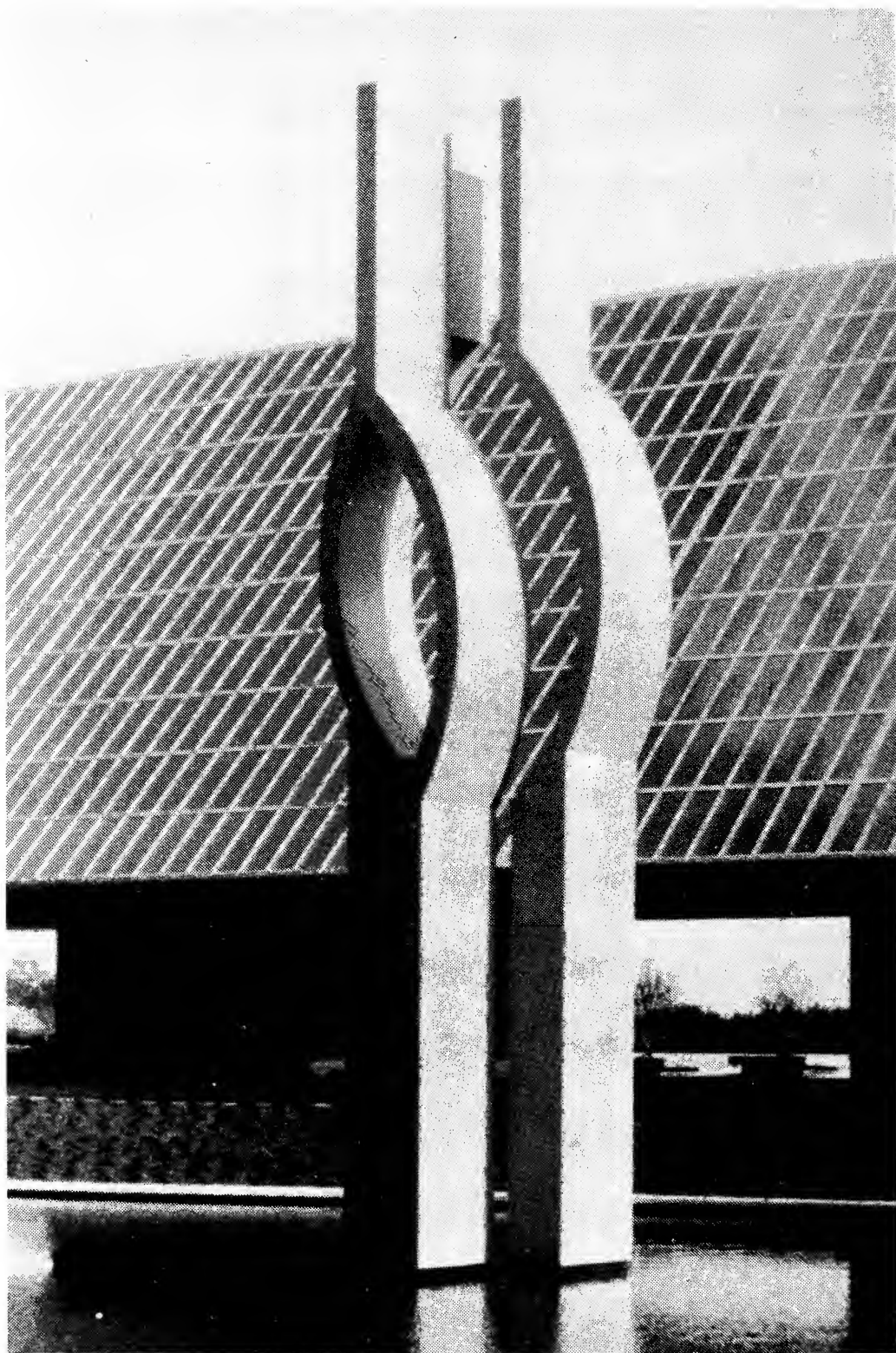
Theological Seminary on the Vanderbilt campus in Nashville, Tennessee. At his invitation this group convened for a week using the barracks and mess hall for residence and the classrooms and auditorium for individual portions of our drama and arts discussions. For my part, I lectured on "Polar Symbols" and "Participant Art."

My coined term, "polar art" means, as I explained in my lecture, a specific expression in art which is tangential to a family of individual meanings. It is a commonality in one sense of many personal understandings. For instance, what would be a good symbol for contemporary space exploration? Icarus is hopelessly outdated; that is, the old ancient symbols can't mean gravity freedom in this new sense. What is the commonality of meaning for the space scientists who created it, the space technician who made it, the astronaut who flew it, the Congressman who funded it, the President who approved it, the people who paid for it, the world people who received it? And what empowers them to act again, together, to go further in space? What? The answer is, of course, that it is being created.

The seminar "Concept Art" dealt with such questions. Only instead of space, it was faith we were attempting to conceptualize. And this, of course, is a topic upon which it is quite hard to reach a common agreement.

In my lecture on "Participant Art" I tried to communicate a discovery made quite by accident in Orlando, Florida. We were working to create a symbol of meaning in sculpture for the Florida Gas Transmission Company. They were a going company at the time we were involved, building a fine ten story headquarters at an important Y intersection near Winter Park. Sandy had suggested a bronze bas relief forty feet long based on the people action that made this company strong. Our concept accepted, we requested of the president that photographs of these characteristic actions and activities be accumulated for use in reference as we modeled the large sculpture. We did not know until later why it took three months to do this. The request had sifted down through channels so that the people who made the company successful chose the photographs—carefully. We modeled them—carefully, and returned to Orlando with our bas reliefs based on the photo/people cast in bronze and subassembled in crates. What a throng greeted our arrival and with what eager anticipation were our crates opened. "Ooh", "ahh" and "there's mine!" What a marvelous time we all had putting up the art work. As we heard, it went on that way for a long time, a living symbol of their accomplishment together.

Participant art can be a strong dynamic. We have used it since then to build a memorial in the St. Louis Zoo to a young boy, Christopher Haglin, who died suddenly and unexpectedly of a brain tumor. Chris had loved the zoo, so all of his friends who cared to participate (and there were forty-seven of them) made a small clay bas relief of some life form. These we cast in bronze and using them like integers to make a number, we made our sculpture of ball within a ball, within a ball, symbol of life ongoing. All artists, together, dedicated it. The sublimation of feelings accumulated together, is art in a positive affirmation of life.



**COMPUTER CONNECTORS** by Sculptors William Severson and Saunders Schultz

Polychromed Cor-Ten steel, forty-eight feet tall, 42,000 pounds. An interpretation of computer connectors that connotes the interface between the insured, the medical profession and the insurance industry for Blue Cross Blue Shield, Chapel Hill, NC.

In research and thought about these phenomena, we have discovered an elemental art fact, *i.e.* art has its origin in the desire to express the inexpressible. It uses homo sapien ability to fantasize, to “do” the undoable, to “speak” the unspeakable and to “know” the unknowable.

S. G. F. Brandon<sup>1</sup> speaks of the “eye-gate,” our first perceptions and our basic understanding in visual metaphors/symbols of all about us, physically and conceptually. Try to think of fire without a flame image or a god concept without some symbol. Even the ancient Hebrew, “He whose name may not be called,” used a *yud* as symbol. The most complex of problems become clear when we “get the picture.”

Brandon speaks of ritual first in primitive man, to act out the rain in sprinkling the ground and dancing—to make it happen. Art is next—to aid, augment and express the ritual aspiration. Both take fantasy and open the doors of reality to larger vistas. This main theme, the “eye-gate,” is the most used and most effective of our senses. The impression received through it most profoundly influences our ideas and emotions. This is, as he continues, one of the most powerful influences in a religion. The reason for this is that the human mind thinks normally in terms of visual images. This is so normal in fact that most people are quite unaware how extensively they use it. They would, in fact, deny that they do. And isn’t this an important ingredient in religion?

Such images constitute our earliest childhood perceptions of the world and it would take a good deal of probing into early memories before finding these early images upon which we have built our concepts. It is perhaps not as important to seek them out as it is to identify their power and restructure relevant current modifications.

Even the raconteur style of communication relies heavily upon these comprehensive symbols derived from the “eye-gate.” In the excited wish to express the awe, wonder and grandeur of space flight, astronaut William Anders, in a newspaper interview, used the (visual) metaphor of “a small blue-green . . . Christmas ornament in a darkened room” as a way of communicating the unsayable, that which is beyond our knowledge and awareness. Thus the origin of my term “polar symbol.”

Art then is the combination of the real and unreal, whether as personal expression of the single soul (Kierkegaard’s existential philosophy)<sup>2</sup> or as a gathered group’s articulation of a consensual reality or belief. It is a powerful dynamic both

The symbols bind together people-parts into a sense of wholeness.

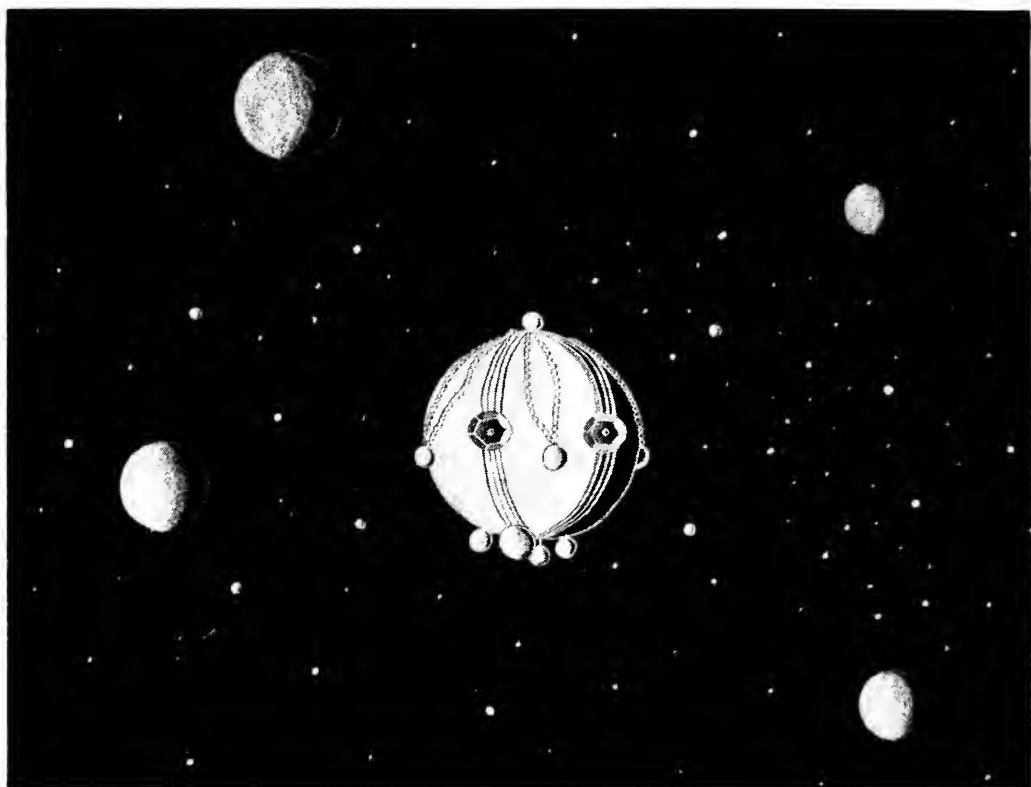
Those who disparage art as idolatrous, do symbolize meaning without figurative form: the Kaaba of the Muslim, the Menorah of the Jew, the barren room of the Friend. The visual is ingrained in our fabric as self-aware beings. The vital signs of meaningful art are the generations of art

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<sup>1</sup> S. G. F. Brandon, *Man and God in Art and Ritual* (N.Y.: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1975).

<sup>2</sup> Soren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1936).





"The earth looked so tiny in the heavens that there were times, during the Apollo 8 mission, that I had trouble finding it. If you can imagine yourself in a darkened room with only one clearly visible object, a small blue-green sphere about the size of a Christmas tree ornament, then you can begin to grasp what the earth looks like from space. I think all of us subconsciously think that the earth is flat, or at least almost infinite. Let me assure you that, rather than a massive giant, it should be thought of as the fragile Christmas tree ball which we should handle with considerable care."

—Astronaut William Anders in a newspaper interview December, 1968

expression of meaning because that is the best way, the normal natural way we human/animals can express ourselves, when what we wish to express is beyond our words. If the motivating force and need is there, a fine and beautiful way will be found to "art" it. In the turgid time of desire to express, art of meaning is born. Like astronaut William Anders' Christmas tree light in a dark room, other space images will emerge and the symbols of our comprehension will be born, tested and nurtured. What is worth doing in art is what we think worth real consideration.

Ossified symbols of another era are no substitution. It is the formulation of the "tablets" of the law, the first person who picked up a cross and marched with it that are the dynamics upon which great art is based.

"What is worth saying about your faith in God?" As an artist I'll find a way to say it magnificently in art.

# **The Clown—Another Fool For Christ's Sake**

**Floyd T. Shaffer**

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There is a hunger for new symbols to assist the reality of expressing and understanding the Christian faith. Throughout history, religious groups have discovered and developed a variety of symbols which are transmitted in worship and life. The clown is one of these which found a place in the Christian Church. The re-emergence of the clown in the last decade has proven to be an effective means for many Christians to view old realities through a fresh perspective.

## **The Biblical/Theological Rationale For The Clown As Symbol**

The Bible offers several insights for the authentication of a "clown ministry."

### *1. God Has A Sense Of Humor, Laughs and Delights.*

It is difficult to read the creation account without capturing the delight of the Creator. The movement from darkness to light, colors and shapes of plants and animals, all have God's approval. When we pause in childlike awe and behold the twinkling stars, sparkling waters, plants that offer color and odor, animals that come in odd shapes with peculiar sizes, and behold persons with individuality, truly we see a God who delights.

A most meaningful account which tells us about God's attitude toward laughter begins in the seventeenth chapter of Genesis. God appeared to Abram, changed his name to Abraham, reaffirmed the covenant relationship, and proceeded to tell him that he and Sarah would have a son whom they were to call Isaac.

Abraham's response to this news caused him to fall on the ground with laughter and challenge the promise of God by pointing out some of the apparent biological difficulties which happen in old age.

The kind of laughter which Abraham exhibited rarely happens unless there is an active trust relationship. The same might be said of

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Floyd Shaffer is an American Lutheran Pastor of Salem Memorial Lutheran Church in Detroit, Michigan. He serves the parish half-time, and devotes the other half to *Faith And Fantasy*, in a clown ministry. Two of his recent films are "The Mark Of The Clown," and "A Clown Is Born."

Abraham's questioning which dealt in some rather intimate details. It seems that Abraham possessed that unique relationship with God which could permit him to offer his feelings, his laughter and tears, joys and sorrows, sarcasm and anger—because he knew he was loved.

While eavesdropping, Sarah discovered she was going to have a child. There is some gentle humor here in that Abraham had not told her of his encounter with God, and the promise of a son. Can you imagine what she might have replied had he told the whole story?

The son is born to aged parents, and according to God's promise is named Isaac. It is at this point that God reveals something magnificent to us. Names were regarded in a very special way. They were seen to be the essence of one's being. A name was a word with unique aliveness and not shared lightly with strangers. It was envisioned as entering a person's ears to be absorbed into the blood, which was thought to be life. This was a powerful expression of intimacy, and names were given with deep meaning.

When we recall that the name Isaac means "one who laughs" or "laughter", and that it was God who named him, then there must be something about the nature of God we often forget. God seems to affirm laughter in a unique way that must mean more than an occasional smile in church.

Some of the humor of Jesus is often missed. In Matthew 22 the Pharisees send their disciples and the Herodians to him in an obvious attempt at humiliation. They ask the question about paying taxes to Caesar. Jesus asks them to produce a coin, which they do. He inquires about the picture on the coin, and they rightfully tell him it is Caesar's. Jesus then tells them to give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's.

We often forget that Hebrew coins did not use the likenesses of persons, which would be idolatrous. Roman coins, for Roman taxation, bore the image of Caesar. The very physical contact with one of these idols, in this case a Roman coin for Roman taxation, was contamination which would have to be dealt with through special cleansings. Indeed, this little event might cause some to refer to Jesus as a gentle prankster because his would-be humiliators are left to do the long ritual cleansings needed, and perhaps to destroy their clothing in the process.

## *2. According To Human Standards, God Is Not Rational*

Society and its organizations have a sense about what they perceive to be rational. When God is measured by some of our standards, it seems to show him to be something other than rational.

Examine the call of Abraham to launch out into the unknown. There were no tests that we know about, no logical selection process through a search group, no stated objectives, just the simple directive to go forth into the unknown because God had something special in mind.

When we look at Judges, we see the same kind of behavior, especially in a man like Gideon. Here he is asked to take a small group of



non-military personnel, arm them with clay pots, horns, and flaming torches to defeat a large, well trained enemy force. Gideon wins in a most unorthodox military venture. This is one more example of the seeming foolishness of God confounding the wisdom of humans.

The prophets also document this unorthodox behavior of God. Of all the prophets he chose to hold before us in Scripture, he seemed to select some very unlikely persons. We have Jeremiah who takes off his clothing and, carrying an ox yoke, parades down the street. We see Amos, a herdsman, asked to preach a social action sermon on poverty and hunger to the wealthy. Hosea marries a woman of the street, and when she returns to her trade, he proceeds to buy her time. Jonah ran away instead of going immediately to conduct a mass evangelism effort. Ezekial saw bones walking and wheels turning in the air.

Certainly a strong case could be made for raising questions of human rationality when we study the prophets. The way Jesus called disciples and sent them forth communicates a haphazard selection process. When we look at the pages of history and see Augustine, Francis, Luther, Wesley, Calvin, and then pause to remember that we too are part of the process, human reason can't possibly describe it as rational.

Childlike simplicity raises a beautifully naive question. If the Biblical narrative points out that God does not seem to function according to human rational standards, then why has the Church so often focused on the logical, rational dimensions? Perhaps it would be helpful if the Church occasionally would step out of the arena of the rational into an area we choose to call the "transrational," where we encounter logic defying things such as: cross-bearing, childlikeness, servanthood, self acceptance, seriousness without solemnity, and laughter. It is precisely in these areas that the clown, not seen by society as rational, choses to act.

### 3. *God Often Works In History As A Comedian*

In addition to using words such as "righteous," "holy," and "just," we may on the basis of Scripture say that God is also a *comedian*. To say this calls for a clarification of comedy. In comedy we find a certain rhythmic process at work. Normally there are two actions and an actor involved.

The first action may be described as profaning what is *seen* to be sacred. This is easily graphed as a downward movement. It may be described as the "put down" or "pulling the rug." The second action is a reversal, making sacred what has been profaned, and raising it to a new dimension. Frequently, these actions are accomplished by a non-hero or in a non-heroic way. If you stop after the first action, it becomes sacrilegious, whether in a human relationship or in dealing with that which is seen to be sacred. Both actions are needed in comedy.

Many of the early silent films of Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton made use of this repeated rhythm. Amazingly, we see many instances of the comedic in Scripture.

In the Old Testament we see the chosen people of God confusing

means with ends. God, working through history, let them be brought down (first action) and, working through judges and prophets (non-heroic types), enabled a remnant to be raised to a new dimension and consciousness of God along with the promise they lived for.

In the New Testament we could cite the conversion of Saul. Here was a person who thought he was doing God's will through persecutions. (He saw some things sacred which were not.) After being struck blind on the road (brought down) and ministered to by Ananias (certainly not a normal hero), he was raised to a whole new dimension in his life. He wasn't changed, rather he was transformed, and Paul was never quite the same again.

The Christmas story is a classic, because God becomes both action and actor. Scripture tells us "the Word became flesh" (bringing down), and "we beheld his glory" (raising up). Jesus certainly rejected hero status (born in a stable, rode a donkey, crucified on a garbage heap). There is even a smiling introduction as angelic choirs are juxtaposed with shepherds, and a fitting postlude as wise men are brought to their knees in a lowly home.

The whole sense of comedy is like a rhythm throughout holy history. We need to wrestle with clearer definitions of comedy to see that it does not necessitate laughter, and is not a joke. It is a model which is consistent with the ways of God as he works in history. It is the model which clowns have adopted.

## **The Clown As Historic Religious Symbol**

The word "clown" is derived from the Anglo-Saxon word "clod." A clod was a lowly, down-to-earth person, like a lump from the soil. No matter how you read the opening chapters of Genesis, it always comes out the same way: God loved a clod. He breathed his spirit into it, made it an object of love, and said that it was good.

The nearest equivalent in the New Testament Greek is the word *doulos*, which means "servant." Of all the words in the New Testament, this one is the lowest form of the servant, the one with no apparent power. This is the word Christ used on the night before his crucifixion, and at other times when he held forth the "servant" as a life-style for his followers.

Even the make-up of clowns has religious significance. The white-face, in every race and culture, is the symbol of death. When applied by the clown-type persons, oral speech was relinquished and communication was transmitted through action. The colors and markings, applied over the white, were life symbols. As this was appropriated in early western Christianity, the meanings were obvious. We are on a journey from death to life. We need the awareness of where we've been, where we're going, and the reality of the present. The clown, being dead to the past, can't be killed, and so responds with action without fear.

Clowns rarely used the concept of "change" because it was seen as linked to magic, e.g. the attempt to change one substance to another, such as lead to gold. They understood magic from the perspective of power. The

magician created the illusion of giving power to a foil, then took away the power leaving the magician as the all-powerful person.

Instead of the word and concept of "change," clowns traditionally use the word and concept of "transform," which simply meant setting apart the common for uncommon use. The use of the common in a special way elevated it to special importance. In terms of power, it was recognized that the most powerful person in the world is the one capable of relinquishing power. This was consistent with the idea of the servant form in the New Testament. Jesus seemed to do this often, setting aside the common for uncommon. He used spit and mud, a child, a woman, and as a final legacy, bread and wine. Clowns historically would not mix magic with their clowning.

Clown-type persons seem to appear in many cultures predating written history. As they emerged in western civilization, there were particular overtones of the Christ symbol. Literature points to the ascending stages of clowndom: adoration (acceptance), rejection, humiliation, and crucifixion. These four stages, seen in ascending order, seem to emerge in many stories and songs of clowns. The final stage was always crucifixion, often the clown's being cast out and no longer able to clown.

An interesting parallel is found in the Gospel lessons, followed by some churches, beginning at Pentecost and concluding just before Advent. Included in the early weeks are examples of Jesus' early acceptance and fame. They are followed by some occasions of disillusionment and rejection. Some weeks later we discover attempts to humiliate Jesus in a variety of ways. Near the end of the liturgical year we see some foreshadowing of the cross, or even a crucifixion account.

Apparently, at some point in history that cannot be documented, a segment of clowns saw this as its own direction. The reason for ascending stages toward crucifixion was a conscious statement, echoed by the make-up, that now, being dead, you can't be killed. It seems that new life was a natural assumption and did not have to be stated.

Prior to the 12th century, the clown symbol was used in the religious and educational life of the community. One major task was that of "interruptor" (not disruptor). During worship or class, a small door might open in the chancel or the front of the lecture hall, revealing the clown. The clown might do or say something funny, but always relate it to what was happening. The intention was more than comic relief, but an attempt to raise the consciousness of the people to a greater sensitivity of what was happening. By "holding up mirrors" before institutions, the clown did not make judgments but sought, through exaggeration, to help people see things for themselves.

This did not make clowns very popular. It wasn't long before they were cast out and church members forbidden to watch them. The accusation was that they were satanic.

There are a few books by clowns, but they are not in great abundance. Usually there are books *about* clowns. Personally, I can

understand this. When you are dealing with the visual, non-speaking, concrete forms of communication, writing is difficult. How do you formulate a concrete symbol into the abstractions of words?

Perhaps this is why so many clowns never wrote. They spoke through their actions. For the clown, like Scripture, word precedes action and happening.

Clowns have never been viewed historically as performers. Their antics, costumes and staging might cause some to question this, but their primary task was to create an environment for something to happen. In the circus it begins with the "walk-around," doing their acts before a small segment of people in the stands and then moving around the arena. They often cover actions while other events happen. Many are equipped as rigging specialists, medics, and protectors. While doing a routine, their watchful eyes are kept on the feature acts and performers. The nature of the clown to the circus is a complex one. Indeed, a circus would not be a circus without them.

Some strong parallels exist between the clown and the Church in the world. Perhaps worship leaders ought to be more concerned with *creating an environment* for worship, rather than mechanically leading worship. The Church needs to be the clown in the world, creating an environment for God's love to happen. The temptation simply to perform is strong. To create an environment means giving away some power and becoming a servant.

There are three major clown types. The first is the "neat" or "white face." The neat clown exaggerates the qualities of childlikeness, is quite vulnerable, caring, trusting, mischievous at times, and is seen as a joy bringer. The second is the "sad face" who evokes the caring instincts from others because most people want to make a sad person "un-sad." The third is the "Auguste" or "grotesque." The grotesque clown, in physical appearance and action, exaggerates the human condition. Best known for the things which don't work, the prat-falls, the grotesque clown is often viewed by fellow clowns as "the one who can stand." Despite the falls, there always seem to be resources, transcendent, personal, or even coming from the audience, which enable the clown to stand. This does not mean the clown will not fall again. When he does, however, he always has the potential to stand again. This is a magnificent illustration of grace.

These are but a few of the ways in which the clown emerges as a religious symbol. Very little has been written because it is difficult to describe a multi-faceted symbol, a symbol which can be incarnated. The very nature of clowning is such that writing about it is difficult. One could almost reply to the question, "Why clown?" with the answer, "If I could tell you, I wouldn't have to clown."

## **Some Applications of Clown Ministry**

Applications of clown ministry must, of necessity, be personal. In 1969, I

began to apply some to a parish situation, as they grew out of my own theology. Since then, I continue to stand in childlike awe of the way in which God uses the simple and foolish to confound humans.

A non-organization, really a network of like-minded Christian clowns, has emerged under the title, *Faith and Fantasy*. Some significant ministries are developing.

Some clowns, with backgrounds in psychotherapy and counselling, have initiated a process called "clownselling." It goes beyond psychodrama. It takes seriously the incarnational approach of God in reaching persons with a variety of psychological problems. The therapist becomes a clown, along with the patient, and experiences are shared and applied. The ability to stand apart and look with humor and fantasy at the human situation seems to bring many into touch with reality in a way not previously experienced.

Another group of clowns is working with persons who are in life-threatening situations. With the symbolic death-life stance of the clown, a ministry is unfolding which is helping patients to come to grips with the realities of death and life. This program has just begun but already has evoked considerable interest as it helps deal with life/death situations through the incorporation of historic comedy.

Since the clown deals in concrete communication, it is possible to take a Biblical teaching, reduce it to its essence, and communicate it through a concrete, visual parable. A number of *Faith and Fantasy* clowns are using this in ministries with the deaf and hearing impaired. It seems to narrow the gap between the deaf and hearing, and abbreviate the time necessary to teach a Biblical lesson. For those who live without words, it seems to be a natural means for communicating the Gospel.

The area of personal growth has been a low-key but major part of the process. The direction of the workshop programs and teaching includes a great deal of environment-setting which enables many to learn about themselves and like themselves. As clowns probe their own possible character and identity, there seems to be a positive transformation of personal attitudes which are exemplified later in regular, day-to-day situations.

Liturgical renewal has been a prominent facet because clowns, across the country and the world, create liturgies without words. The purpose is to raise the consciousness of worshippers and to help them focus on what is happening in worship. Clown liturgies do not replace words, rather they heighten the awareness of what is said in order that the words may come to life in the best of Biblical tradition.

It is difficult to describe a "clown liturgy." The clowns are from a wide variety of Christian traditions. Normally, they will follow a general flow of worship—with a period of preparation, an invocation, confession with absolution, praise, sermon, offering, communion, and a sending forth. The parts usually flow naturally from one to the other, and there is ample latitude for improvisation without disrupting the flow. The entire worship

is a non-speaking celebration. Persons are invited to listen with their eyes and to respond with their whole self. Clowns do not view this as a performance. A real consciousness seeks to create the environment for the people of God to worship. There is also an intentional awareness that both intellect and feeling can be reached at the same time, and there are attempts to avoid the emphasis of one at the expense of the other. The frustration of describing a clown liturgy generated a brief film, "The Mark Of The Clown," which looks at worship through the eyes of children.

Other applications of the clown ministry include film making, television, campus ministries, marriage enrichment retreats, congregational stewardship programs, evangelism thrusts, hospital and institutional ministries, and—clowning just for the fun of it.

Court jesters were employed by kings as constant reminders of the king's humanity. When the jester was faithful, and did the job well, execution could result. Clown-type persons who hold up mirrors of reality will never be popular. Clown ministry is moving in many directions within a great number of Christian denominations. There are two ways in which the clown, who chooses to function *within* the institution but not *of* the institution, can be "crucified." One is through accusations of sacrilege, but those have been dealt with many times, and the Biblical/Theological/Historical basis is very strong. The other is simple. *Hire* the clown and make clowning simply another *program* of the church.

The paradox of the clown continues, appearing in various ways throughout history. It seems to be an apocalyptic symbol that appears in times of hopelessness. Maybe God raises clowns at these moments in history as reminders that He is alive and well and continuing to work in the world.

# Vitalizing Worship with Dance

Doug Adams

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The question is not, "Should there be dance in worship?" There is movement in worship already even if people simply come in, sit down, stand up, sit down, stand up, sit down, stand up, and walk out. The critical question is, "Which movements should we do in worship, at which times, to help us express and experience the different parts of worship most vitally?" To this task we must bring our best understanding of what worship is as well as what dance movements are possible with congregation and dance choir. Different dance forms cultivate different theological understandings.

## First Steps: Biblical and Historical Dances

Reenacting historical worship services from Biblical times is one way to help churches experience the range of dance forms that has shaped Jewish and Christian sensibility. Such reenactments not only help worshippers realize certain forms of dancing are traditional in Jewish and Christian worship, they also give worshippers a range of experience with movement so they may select dances appropriate to services they have designed.\*

Historic worship services with dance should be done at appropriate times in the religious or civil calendar; for instance, carol dancing obviously would be introduced in an Advent or Christmas worship service when one is stressing the Incarnation and the power of the Word becoming flesh. But a single dance or movement also can be drawn from history and effectively incorporated in a worship service; for instance, typical movements from early American worship services could be used in a July 4 worship service or in a Thanksgiving worship service. Early American worship leaders, following the preferred prayer position of Old and New

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\* Two books by the author serve as references in this regard. *Involving the People in Dancing Worship: Historic and Contemporary Patterns* gives patterns for dance in worship from the early and medieval church, Eastern Orthodox Church and early American churches, including Shakers, the Black church and frontier camp meetings. *Dancing Christmas Carols* describes dances by congregations and dance choirs set to some thirty Christmas carols. Both books are available from the Sharing Company, P.O. Box 2224, Austin, Texas 78767.

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Doug Adams is Associate Professor of Worship, Preaching, and the Arts at Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley, California, and is President of the International Sacred Dance Guild. He is the author of three books on dance for worship, including his recent volume *Dancing Christmas Carols*, and is an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ.

Testament eras, led people to stand for prayer with arms extended forward and raised above their heads.

Using that early American (and Biblical) gesture also when praying the Lord's Prayer in contemporary worship helps one sense the vitality of words incarnated. When people simply sit and pray "Thy kingdom come," the posture suggests the worshipper can do little to aid the kingdom's coming; when people stand with arms raised and extended forward, the posture suggests the worshipper *can* aid in the kingdom's coming. Such a posture is equally appropriate in reenactments in Jewish worship and so is ecumenically appropriate in the broadest sense.

## **Processions: Marching as the Paradigmatic Dance in Worship**

From Biblical and historical studies, certain theological guidelines emerge to aid the worship leader in designing contemporary worship with dance. First, the processional march is the paradigmatic form of dance in both Jewish and Christian worship. The theological significance of the march is best seen when contrasted with the circle dance. In both forms of dance, the individual is incorporated into the community. In the circle dance, the community is oriented inwardly upon itself. God transcends the group, yet is envisioned at its center focusing attention within the group. In the march, the community is oriented beyond itself. God again transcends the group, but he is envisioned as leading the people out into the world. The circle dance leads the worshipper over and over the same ground, cultivating a cyclical view of events; the march leads the people out of cyclical world views into a forward movement, more in keeping with faiths that make history meaningful. Although the circle dance is more congenial with eastern religions and the march with western religions, both Judaism and Christianity may utilize circle dances at times. But the march is appropriately the most frequently employed dance in western religions.

The particular pattern of the march is instructive. The *tripudium* step was the most commonly used form—with processional hymns through the streets and into the church, or into the world at the close of worship, or within the church during the singing of choruses to hymns. (As a clue to dance patterns in the church, it is helpful to remember that in hymns "stanza" means "stand" or "halt" while "chorus" means "dance." That is precisely what the congregation did during hymns in worship. Before the Reformation, there were few pews in places of worship; what pews were present were against the side walls for the elderly and infirm.) In the tripudium march (which can be used with most favorite hymns and carols), the people process in rows of three or four abreast, arms linked. They move three steps forward and one step backwards, three steps forward and one back. Thus, there is a recognition of setbacks in the context of progress. (The tripudium march expresses quite a different theology than a dance that might go one step forward and three steps back.) Also, three or four people in each row, moving forward with arms linked, expresses a theology



quite different from a single-file dance. It incorporates those who do not easily keep in step; they are brought along by others in their row.

## **Bold Leaps: Joyful Jumping to Avoid Insipid Gestures**

The Latin *tripudium* (meaning “three step”) came to be translated as “jubilate” or “jubilation” in the choruses of English hymns. That translation emphasizes another important theological affirmation in Jewish and Christian dance: it is predominately joyful in character. Old Testament Israelite dance in worship became exclusively joyful in an attempt to distinguish itself from surrounding near-eastern religions, in which mourning dances as well as joyful dances were common. Also, joyful dance was associated with the Israelite people’s responsibility in the world around them. The first Old Testament dance is by Miriam at the Exodus from slavery. When the temple was destroyed in the first century and the people were exiled in the second century, dancing ceased in Jewish worship until the eighteenth century Hassidic movement. (The one exception was in wedding services where the dance expressed hope that the newly united couple would give birth to the Messiah who would restore the temple and return the people to the homeland.)

As with many other worship elements, the joyful dance of Judaism was continued by the early Church. “Rejoicing” and “dancing” are synonymous in the Aramaic language Jesus spoke; so, Jesus’ saying in Luke 6:23 is understandable, “Rejoice and leap for joy!” The emphasis in Jewish Temple courtyard dancing and in the early Church was on energetic, almost acrobatic leaps (not on graceful gestures of the arms or upper part of the body).

Such jumping involves the whole body in movement and affirms that God made the whole body. In contrast, gentle arm gestures (that one sees too often in contemporary worship) affirm only the upper part of the body as belonging to God; even that affirmation is rather insipid. By ignoring the lower half of the body completely, gentle arm gestures contribute to a dualistic devaluing of most of the body, or at least express doubt about the lower half’s origin and value. Bold jumping for joy in worship dispels such doubt or dualism.

To sense the difference that full-bodied movement makes to worship, we may invite the congregation to say “rejoice” while seated, again while standing, and then again while jumping up with arms extended above the head. Such jumping or leaping for joy could be encouraged during the singing of words such as “joy” or “rejoice” in choruses of such hymns as “O Come, O Come Emmanuel” or “Rejoice Ye Pure In Heart.” Thankfully, such leaping in the air vertically is possible even within the confinement of bolted-down pews.

Bold movements in worship lead many adults (men and women) to appreciate dance in worship. Insipid gestures (the gentle swaying of hands and arms that unfortunately typified much liturgical dance in the 1950s and

1960s) understandably disaffects many ministers and laity from appreciation of dance in worship, whether it is by the congregation or by a dance choir. Gutless, flimsy movements have little in common with the powerful prophetic tradition of the Bible.

## **Percussive, Asymmetrical, Prophetic Dance: Disrupting Sustained, Symmetrical, Priestly Dance**

Historically, Jewish and Christian liturgical dancing has been concerned most with arousing the enthusiasm of the whole congregation and less with involved performances of excellent dance. There is a place for excellent solo dancers and dance companies in liturgy. In such performances, the rigor of the prophetic Jewish and Christian faiths should be evident. During the "Twentieth Annual Sacred Dance Guild Festival," I led a discussion on differences between the priestly and the prophetic in religion. For dancers, the priestly concern leads to symmetrical dance forms where all is sustained in harmony and order. But the prophetic concern leads to asymmetrical dance developments where new percussive dimensions disorder our previous conceptions of proper form. We need both the priestly and prophetic in sacred dance, although Judaism and Christianity tilt toward the prophetic.

Presently, sacred dances in worship are expressing the priestly symmetry and sustaining form far more than the prophetic asymmetry and percussive interaction. We need to urge dancers to move sacred dance from the symmetrical to the asymmetrical for growth. In *Art of Making Dances*, Doris Humphrey expands the meaning of asymmetry in dance, but I would add the following guidelines.

1. Give the congregation the opportunity to see dances in progress and avoid always giving them finished products. Dances in progress contain within them the seeds of asymmetry, for they are growing and have not been neatly edited and finished. On one Sunday, present the dance in progress. On a subsequent Sunday, give the finished dance. A dance in progress entertains many possibilities and is inclusive of the wildest ideas, much as the prophetic vision includes parts of society usually outcast by the priestly vision.

2. Reverse the usual editing process with the dance, *i.e.* incorporate those elements usually edited out. Usually the rough or incompatible elements we leave on the cutting-room floor (or rehearsal dance floor) have the prophetic potential. When we do dances that are safe and that do not stretch us or the congregation, we are doing priestly dances that consolidate what we already are. But when we do prophetic dances, we bring into the worship what some people may see as unacceptable, *i.e.* the prophetic spirit brings together what others see as incompatible.

3. Change dance styles and encourage new dances. The spirit of the prophetic calls for new dances as it does new songs; to the words of Scripture, "Sing to the Lord a new song!", we should add, "Dance to the

Lord a new dance!" Initially, when prophetic and asymmetrical dances, music or words are repeated again and again, they become domesticated and begin to strike us as symmetrical and no longer asymmetrical. John Cage noted that the American flag is used by Jasper Johns in art precisely because it is a paradox in broad daylight; it is radically asymmetrical in design but we have seen it so often that it becomes symmetrical and undisturbing to us. We need to encourage new dances that stretch us and others, for then we move in the prophetic tradition and open to dancing the unthinkable. When popularized Jewish piety led people to see leaven as unholy and to take great care lest leaven get into the dough or the Passover loaf, Jesus shattered the religious mind by saying, "The Kingdom of God is like putting leaven in the dough." Let us encourage leaven in sacred dance.

## **Vital, Mysterious Dance: Speaking Theologically with Dance and Dancers**

Worship leaders should engage dancers in conversation on theology to broaden the range of dance and not narrow it. Many dancers tacitly hold a theology that confines their perceptions and creations in churches; they do better dances outside the church than inside. Speaking theologically with dancers may help bring their full gifts into worship with dance and help the dance transcend rather than conform to preconceived beliefs.

As the human figure reemerges in art (and the human voice reappears in music along with plot and first-person speech in novels and poetry), we have artists eager for engagement with theologians who speak as theologians. But many of our preachers, theologians, and worship leaders became acquainted with the arts in the 1950s when artists, such as Barnett Newman, discouraged talk about philosophical matters related to any particular art work: "Aesthetics is as interesting to me as ornithology is for the birds." And so, when the ballet or modern dance company is "engaged" by a cathedral or church to dance a sermon, the worship leader too often greets the dance company's questions on forms of the liturgy, sermon, and theology with a self-effacing, "Just do whatever you do."

Dancers and artists are not asking preachers and worship leaders to teach them to dance or paint, but to give them a sense of the expectations and beliefs of the congregation. (Such expectations and beliefs are often more expansive than the dancers' own understanding and probably free the shape of their creation.)

In her recent work, *Theology In The Shape of Dance* (The Sharing Company), Judith Rock comments on how dance makes other theological statements:

If we believe that we live in the best of all possible times, in the best of all possible worlds, then our dance will be glib and pretty full of cliches. If on the other hand, we believe that there is evil and pain in the world, our dance must include those realities. If we believe that faith is largely an intellectual matter, then our dances will mostly involve the upper body, head, and arms. If,

however, our theology includes strong feelings and gutsy experiences, then we must dance also from and with the center of the body, the spine and pelvis. . . . If we believe that God is not mysterious at all, that God's ways are perfectly clear and understandable, then we will be mainly concerned about being visible and assuming static postures. However, if we believe that the Spirit moves mysteriously and where it will, and that our business is to respond, our dance will be full of movement, covering space, not always pretty, and perhaps not always even visible. (pp. 7-8)

With most dance groups, our task is to urge them to increase the energy levels in their dances so they move away from sustained, static, symmetrical forms and toward percussive, changing, asymmetrical interactions.

## **Meaningful Dance: Stretching Congregations Through Pre-Sermon Seminars with Dancers**

Arranging for members of the congregation to work with dancers before their works are incorporated in the preaching or worship, assures a reception of their work as an extension of the congregation's body (through which the congregation may concentrate on) and not as something alien (which only will attract attention to itself).

For example, a dance group may be asked to do a dance on the story of Abraham and Isaac in a coming worship service. The congregation might gather on a fellowship evening a few weeks before the dance is to be in worship. The congregation could reflect that evening on the Biblical story in clusters of five or six persons. First, each person would be asked to imagine that he or she is Abraham and to reflect on how he would feel when called upon to sacrifice a son. After a moment to think about that silently, each one is asked to focus on the emotion by saying aloud one or two words which express it. There may be as many different words and emotions expressed as there are people.

Then each might be asked to take a physical position and maintain it (as a sculpture) which expresses the emotion and word on which he or she has been reflecting. The dancers would not join the clusters in this process but would move around them taking careful notes on the positions and words which they might incorporate later into the final dance.

Secondly, the people might be asked to take positions expressing the emotions Isaac felt when he realized his father intended to sacrifice him, and that God had asked his father to do it. And the people might express how Abraham or Isaac felt when God's messenger announced that Isaac will live. To personalize the story even more, one might remind the people that Isaac was Abraham's future, his only hope. Thus, when they are asked to imagine Abraham's emotion when called upon to kill his son, they also imagine being called upon to kill one's own future and hopes.

When these living sculptures are in place and holding their positions, someone could go to each and ask them to say aloud the word (emotion) that he or she is expressing in his or her position. If more time is available, people could be invited to share briefly a time in which they

themselves had that emotion. During this process, some will mention tragedies in their own lives or in the life of the nation or world. Some will mention the great relief and joy they have felt when they passed tests they thought they would fail, or when a close friend lived rather than died, etc. Others may express being stunned by quick changes in the story and in their own lives.

As the people repeatedly move through the three different positions assumed that evening, the dancers could move around the clusters and begin to mirror and embody the congregation's movements. When the dancers have drawn as fully as they wish from these movements, the congregation is invited to sit down and begin watching the dancers evolve a finished dance based on the congregation's bodily expressions of Abraham and Isaac that evening. This period (however brief) helps the congregation see how the dancers are taking the congregation's movements seriously and how creation in dance occurs with a great deal of working and reworking.

As another possibility, one or two could move around the living sculptures and take Polaroid or other flash pictures and slides. These pictures could be used later, not only to aid the dance group in creating a finished choreography for the sermon or worship, but also via overhead projector or slide projector as the backdrop to the subsequent danced sermon or worship. Those who participated in the fellowship evening might be asked during the worship service to share their reasons for posing in particular ways: *i.e.*, what emotions a position expressed and what insights they had in the Biblical story and its relation to events in their own lives.

Through such methods, individual expression and insights are encouraged while the shape of the community's faith emerges through dance. When the dance is performed in that kind of worship, the congregation can see it as an extension of their own body.

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# As Clay in the Potter's Hands

**Marjory Zoet Bankson**

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Jesus used common images and stories to teach his followers about the kingdom of God. When I began working with clay thirteen years ago, the process of making a pot revealed new things to me about the gospel. Like Jeremiah, I saw and felt what I had only heard before. That is the power of including "the arts" in teaching. Words come alive when we can use our senses more fully. And our words take on new meaning when pictures make connections that are new. I hope this article will make potting a parable in motion for you.

## Common Clay

Every time it rains, clay mysteriously appears between bricks, in roadside drains and in the squishy bottom of any mudpuddle. Found everywhere, clay is a combination of weathered stone and decaying vegetable matter. Tiny particles of rock are mixed with rotting organic stuff to make a plastic, moldable substance. What child has not discovered the wonder of finding clay by some brookside, forming an object or figure out of it, and having it remain when the water dries out of it? No wonder the Genesis writer pictured God scooping up a handful of clay and breathing life into it as the story of how human beings were formed. Its elementary quality speaks of grounding in the earth, of belonging to the long rhythms of erosion and reformation.

Clay has the power to draw forth the creative child in me as no other art medium has. There is something very exciting about making a three-dimensional shape like myself, something that was never seen before. It speaks to me of being made in the image of God as an image-maker myself! I am called to be a creator, to move beyond what I know how to do already. The clay invites me into that process by its easy availability and workability.

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Marjory Bankson, potter and retreat leader, is a member of "Seekers" at Church of the Savior in Washington, D.C. She shares a cooperative studio called "Going to Pot" at the Torpedo Factory Art Center, Alexandria, VA, and is the Virginia *Faith at Work* field representative. She is a graduate of Radcliffe College and holds an M.A. from the University of Alaska. Her husband, LTC Peter R. Bankson, is assigned in the Washington, D.C. area.



"For me, pottery is a language. The shape you see is the skin of an idea and it is a word shared between us. The relationship can be recognized and named when your fingers touch where mine have been. Creation continues as we live out of that relatedness."



Not only does the material invite creativity, but its relative permanence beckons the imagination into story-telling as well. As my hands shape and change the clay, my mind plays with meaning and with naming. "Where did you come from?" I ask. "And what is your name?" That has opened to me an experience with the Hebrew sense of unity between object and spirit. I know it as I do it. Such imagination or image-making is another name for loving my neighbor. We share stories because we sense we are connected, bound by something organic. It is the breath of life, the Holy Spirit indeed.

Working with clay is a dialogue between artist and material, not just the imposition of an idea on some totally conforming stuff. Clay is opaque, tough, durable, has limited plasticity when wet and can be transformed into stone with fire. If God is the potter and I am the clay, it is good news to me that God must work with my particular nature rather than making me unrecognizable to myself. Just as clay will never be glass, I will not be made "unhuman." God does not destroy who I am in order to create me in God's image!

## **Prepared by Kneading**

The process of making a pot begins with kneading: working the clay by pressing it in rhythmical motion against some hard surface, mixing dry and wet spots into a uniform mass. Pressure is applied to the outside of the clay, but most of the change occurs next to the wedging board, where it cannot be seen. I feel that way in the midst of a crisis or major change. Old forms and patterns are destroyed to make way for something new. That happens most dramatically whenever we move from one location to another. When my husband is reassigned by the Army, he moves to a known job with concomitant responsibilities. I start from zero to establish my pottery and find a church community. That is kneading time, mixing grief and good-byes into strengths and skills gained in that place, in preparation for some new life-shape.

While kneading does not determine the shape of a new pot, the texture of the clay does influence the possibilities open to the artist. Whenever I leave the security of known patterns, I have some dry spots in my life where change and growth are no longer possible. When we moved to Washington, D.C., from Leavenworth, Kansas, three years ago, clay and church were in separate compartments. I sold pots from our Victorian house and taught an adult Sunday school class, but did not combine the two. When we moved, I was blocked from selling pots directly by zoning rules, so I did not hook up my kiln right away. Depressed and at sea about what ministry I might have in the D.C. area, I turned inward and began recording dreams, images, ideas and plans without trying to make a decision about how to begin.

People often ask, "When do you know the kneading is done?" With clay, it's done by feel or touch. The lump is smooth and plastic, free of

bubbles and clods, with a doughlike springiness in it. In my life, I sensed the kneading time was over when I had this dream: I am sitting on a busy street corner with my potter's wheel. As people go by, I offer them newly-formed pots, still wet and shining and soft. Many people stop, surprised and then take one with child-like delight. Although I did not know what the dream meant, it gave me a picture of what actually developed.

## Centering

If kneading is dialogue, then centering is dance. When the wheel is in motion, it throws the clay outward with centrifugal force. To counter-balance that, I press inward with my hands, guiding the lumpy mass toward the center with centripetal motion. These forces vary with the speed of the potter's wheel and the tempo of the whole process quickens. The dynamic interplay only happens when the clay is turning on the wheel; there is no way that I can pound or roll it into an even mound at the center of the wheel. There is excitement and tension too, as clay slip or water is added lavishly and the shapeless lump begins to conform to my hands. While still a preparation stage, centering speaks more of relationship between potter and clay. In kneading, the potter imposes force on the clay, but in centering, the clay answers back and the wheel's motion gives the clay a force of its own.

To be in motion, expecting the guiding hand of God, is the key to this centering process in my own life. After we moved from Leavenworth, I sought a church community where God's presence seemed to be a real shaping force. We visited several churches that felt finished and dry, not open to lay participation except through traditional forms. We had read about Church of the Saviour in *Faith at Work* magazine and knew that the Biblical concepts of "call" and "spiritual gifts" and "priesthood of all believers" were taken seriously there. When we got there in the fall of 1976, we were dismayed to find that the 120-member congregation had split into six sister communities, each with a separate call to mission. However, the ferment seemed healthy and there was a definite trust in God as a potter, shaping new things from old clay, so we stayed. We signed up for an Old Testament class in their School of Christian Living and I began to feel centered and quiet.

The centering process often takes longer than the potter expects, particularly if the clay is not very pliable. Water is added each time pressure is applied to the clay, softening and shaping the clay until it is drawn to the focal point. I am, by nature, a very impatient person, anxious to begin a discernable shape. Learning the importance of centering from the clay has helped me to let go of my "hurry-up" impulse. Instead of six weeks, which I thought adequate for adjusting to the move from Leavenworth, it took six months! And I am still learning to "wait on the Lord."

## Opening a Spirit Space

Once the clay is centered, the potter creates a single hole in the middle, in order to make pressure from the inside of the clay mound as well as from the outside. Opening the clay means allowing a place for the unseen inner hand to press outward against the visible hand pressing inward. The inner hand works with the centrifugal force of the wheel, stretching the clay outward toward a bowl shape. The outer hand continues centering and controlling the direction of that thrust. The shape of a pot can stay primitive and awkward if the process stops there, like people who do not move beyond an initial conversion experience. A "spirit space" has been opened to allow for the inner force to press outward, but the potential elasticity and grace of the clay body has not been fully explored.

Opening the centered clay of my life actually occurred with three telephone calls in January, 1977. One was a request, from Church of the Saviour, to teach a class on discovering gifts and creativity for the spring term. Normally that class would have been taught by a long-time member of the church, but with leadership moving into six different communities, I was asked to teach. The second was a call from a woman who had heard me talk about God and the clay in my pottery studio: would I speak at their denominational convention next summer? The third call came from a pastor in Lincoln, Nebraska, with whom I had shared some dreams at a *Faith at Work* event. He asked if I would design and lead a three-day event at his church, using clay in some way. All three calls asked me for a new combination of clay and theology, so I took it as a sign from God, following the dream described above. I said, "Yes," to all three and a new opening was made in my centered clay.

## Pulling a Cylinder

Just as your skin rises between pinching fingers, clay rises in response to opposing pressures. When the inner and outer pressures are evenly balanced and drawn slowly upward at one spot on the circling wall, a graceful cylinder seems to spring upward from the wheel. It feels balanced, centered and under control. I see the inner hand as the spiritual thrust in my life, while the outer hand represents structural commitments, obligations, jobs and activities. The active shape is created from the inside; it is curbed and guided by the "givens" of home and work, church and society. In clay, the shape you see is really the "skin" of an idea which is described by the inner space. And the form of my life is a visible manifestation of the spirit inside.

During the spring of 1977, my life stretched and extended, yet stayed on center. I taught one class at Church of the Saviour and balanced that against membership in a pottery cooperative which gave me a market outlet in this area. There was time to develop new ways to nourish my inner life through daily Bible reading, prayer, meditation, silent retreat and keeping

a journal. From the outside, a constant and gentle pressure came from our marriage, a few old friends and the pottery group. Such evenly balanced pressure creates a straight cylinder, aesthetically pleasing and very functional.

## Shape Means Imbalance

There is nothing wrong with a straight cylinder, but if every pot were that shape, it would be boring! Nature abounds with curves, not straight lines. And the dynamic interplay of centrifugal and centripetal forces call forth possibilities for stretching the clay into new and even dangerously exciting shapes. When either side is allowed to predominate, the potential for myriad variations on the cylinder are there. But the potter is also aware that the danger of failure is suddenly increased! Clay has certain elastic limits, and speed plus pressure may suddenly exceed its pliability.

Living into imbalance is frightening and exhilarating. With each "pull" by the potter, the clay is thinned and stretched, more vulnerable with each stroke. The potter's touch is light and firm. The image of dancing together moves deeper as the limits are tested and then stretched farther. In the summer and fall of 1977, my life began to take on new shape. I consciously nurtured that inner spiritual thrust by extending my reading into dreams, healing and Christian mysticism. I spent a week at Pendle Hill Retreat Center with M. C. Richards in a workshop called "Clay as a Way of Soul-Making." The patterns of our marriage were stretched as my husband and I chose to attend separate, week-long growth labs, sponsored by *Faith at Work*. At mine, I met a woman who was moving into pastoral counselling from nursing and she encouraged me to take this call toward clay and ministry quite seriously. None of these experiences were forced on me unbidden, and I know that sometimes imbalance occurs that way. Although I anticipated that each of these things would encourage the inner thrust of the spirit in my life, I also knew there would be times of doubt, indecision and probably pain as well, as old forms gave way to new ones.

When the inner force predominates, flaring a cylinder into bold shape, the quality of touch from the outside becomes important. Support and guidance from the centering outer side must be light and firm, lubricated so that the tender clay doesn't tear with friction. As I began to travel to different churches with my potter's wheel, sharing images out of my work with clay and theology, I was aware of the gentle pressure from outside commitments which anchored me in this community. I chose to be away from home no more than one weekend a month, because it was too hard on our marriage. I agreed to teach all three terms at the School of Christian Living, which necessitated a regular study schedule. And my partners at the pottery shop expected a regular supply of good, functional pots to sell. To counterbalance the heady excitement of travel, making deep contact with people who are also seeking a deeper spiritual life, and expanding my own sense of call, I chose a spiritual director this fall. This

wise, older woman has been a shepherd, holding me accountable for my gifts and guiding me toward membership in the church. All of these relationships have had a quieting and steadying effect on my life as the excitement of my new-found spiritual center stretched me into a new shape.

## **Falling and Failure**

The most dramatic result of shaping may be collapse of the whole pot! The secular world screams, "Stop! Be careful! Don't fail!" Its underlying message is that we only live once and must be successful at all costs. The existential message I see on television is to seek pleasure and avoid pain; that is what life is all about.

The Bible presents a different picture of what makes life worth living. To simplify it drastically, I see that we are here to discover who we are in relationship to God. When the Lord sent Jeremiah down to the potter's house (Jer 18:1-6), it was to show the prophet a message of hope in the middle of his destructive age. Jeremiah saw the pot "spoiled in the potter's hand" and then he watched while the potter used that same clay to make a new vessel. That was surely an Old Testament precursor of crucifixion and resurrection! The message for Jeremiah gave him hope that God would continue to care for and shape His people, even when they chose to disobey. Whenever I rework a piece of clay, I am reminded of God's covenant to be in relationship with us.

Clay that collapses because one hand or the other has forced it beyond elastic or gravitational limits reminds me that our faith gives us the freedom to fail. That gives me the courage to live my life fully, faithful to the call which I hear. I know that God can and does rework my choices. Whenever I work with a piece of clay, my whole attention is focused there. It is no mass-production process. Pots are made one at a time, each unique and special, coming out of the relationship between potter and clay at that moment. I believe I am to be faithful to that process, not necessarily successful in the world's terms.

The freedom to fail is at the heart of the creative process. I once heard Beverly Sills say, "A craftsman needs to know how a thing will turn out. An artist doesn't." She was referring to the craft of reproducing results, doing what we already know how to do. At one level I am a craftswoman, developing the talents I have and sharing them with others who need my skills. Those known patterns provide a sense of safety and security, of being "home safe." At another level I am an artist, an explorer, moving into unknown territory. At that point, my creativity is stretched. If I am made in the image of God as a creator, then I am truly called to be an artist in whatever I do. That is, as a believer, I am called to engage deeply with the people and events of my life, risking failure or error because of the gospel message that Jeremiah saw in the pottery!

## **Glazing Names the Pot**

Going back to the image of a child making something out of clay and telling

a story of it at the same time, I am reminded that the book of Genesis ascribes to mankind the task of naming all God's creatures. In Hebrew, that knowing and name-giving has a sense of soul connection about it. The Bible contains a number of instances where a person was given a new name to signify an inner change. In pottery, glazing is like naming. As I throw a pot on the wheel, alert to the clay and its particular nature, the appropriate glaze begins to emerge. I choose the texture and color of the glaze to enhance its function: glassy for the inside of food dishes, rough for planters, perhaps none at all for a sculptural piece. Glazing further identifies a pot, naming it in a particular way.

Right now, I am taking on a new name which identifies the shape my life has taken since we moved to Washington. That name is "member of Seekers," one of the six communities at Church of the Saviour. Believing as I do, that God gives his gifts into community for the building of the body of Christ, I have struggled with the meaning of that for me. My individual call seems to be "outreach teaching," encouraging spiritual growth or depth within established churches or other institutions. I am aware of the danger this personal vision carries with it: I may mistake God's power for my own! And so this fall, I have been in close dialogue with "Seekers" to define and establish a relationship with this local expression of Christ's body.

## Firing Means Transformation

When a pot is finished and glazed, it is fired to white heat in a kiln. The twenty-four hour process burns out all the organic matter that once made the clay so plastic, and the minerals actually melt into a new molecular compound. The firing cycle is still a mystical experience for me. I load the kiln, seal up the cracks and turn on the heat very slowly at first. Although I control the natural gas supplied to the burners, I do not control the fire itself. If something begins to happen during the firing, I cannot rescue a beloved pot from the flames! Sometimes I hold a special pot for months, unwilling to make a commitment to the transforming fire, for fear that it will break apart. That hesitance bespeaks my own fear of change, my lack of faith in resurrection. It describes the *sin* of falling in love with one form, trying to make it permanent by leaving it alone or putting it in a dry place where moisture will not dissolve it. But preserving a pot in that way is an illusion, for it has not been vitrified by heat.

Firing reminds me of physical death and resurrection of the body: the pot which comes out of the kiln is the same as I made it, yet it is different, transformed by flame. Unsophisticated as this view may be, I sense the kiln as a place of melding judgment and grace. The organic slime which allowed stony platelets to slide into new and different shapes is burned away, as I think the rotting and decaying matter in our lives will be cleansed away in some mysterious judgment time. The space created by this burning away is then filled by a new crystal structure, as the fire releases elements from one type of bonding into another that is actually a form of

stone. The kiln is like a tiny volcano, sending off gassy vapors and melting earth into igneous rock. The “good news” is that each one of us contains a portion of eternal stone in the base clay!

Working with clay reminds me that I live in a physical world which also has eternal dimensions. One way to live richly and abundantly is to enjoy the larger dimensions of God’s perspective as revealed to us in daily activities like pottery. Repeating this parable on the potter’s wheel in a daily celebration of God’s relationship with each of us gives me the courage to face into my life, rather than back away from it. When I am tempted to be only a craftswoman, doing what I know how to do, I am reminded that God calls me to be an artist too, moving into the unknown places as Jesus did. I am called to live into engagements with people and events, rather than retreating; to risk failure when I hear Christ’s call for a new shape; to be creative and different when the secular world values productivity and sameness.

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# More Than Just Play—Reflections on Leisure

Albert R. Elliott



Ft. Stewart, GA, Recreation Services hosted a “Rec-A-Rama Information Display Day,” 11 June 1977. Each of seven core groups had displays to represent their programs. Art Emerson, above, demonstrated potters’ techniques for the Multi-Craft Shop. (US Army Photograph)

Look closely at the picture above. Try to see what’s happening. Study the body language of the observers and the craftsman. Now, pick the person who most typifies *your* response to watching someone throw a pot. Don’t hedge! Do it! Put yourself in the picture. Which person are you?

Dr. Elliott is the Head of the Area of Leisure Studies at Georgia Southern College, Statesboro, GA. Though a relatively new academic field, leisure studies is being recognized as a growing area of concern. Dr. Elliott’s instruction offers training on the undergraduate level for leadership roles in such fields as Public Recreation and Therapeutic Recreation. Graduate degrees are offered in Recreational Services’ Administration.

## **Which Person Are You?**

Are you the boy in the baseball cap in the foreground, eyes bulging, mouth open, as close to the "action" as possible, amazed at how that mound of clay has been changed into a piece of pottery? His arms are still folded, but I'll bet if you asked him, "Would you like to try it?", he'd say, "Yes!" And he would be up on his feet, right by the wheel, waiting instruction. Are you the boy in the baseball cap?

Or would you be the third child on the floor, the girl with the long flowing hair? The excitement of the event drew her to a position close to the demonstration. She was with other friends, a belonging, but as the demonstration progressed, her true interests occupied her mind and she was there, but really wasn't there at all. Lost in her own thoughts, she is part of the crowd but not a part of what her two friends are experiencing. Are you the girl with the long flowing hair?

Or would you be the boy directly behind the craftsman? You didn't see him? Why, he's always a part of every group. Looking around, trying to see everything there is to see. What's going on over there and there, and here and there and everywhere? Not staying with anything too long. Just skimming the surface. Not too involved. Are you the boy directly behind the craftsman?

Or would you be one of the others, standing with arms folded? Show me. Entertain me. I'm interested in viewing, not doing. It's okay for you but not for me. I appreciate it. But do they? Are you one of the others, standing with arms folded?

Have you found yourself yet? Yes? No? Maybe you're the craftsman. Look at him closely. Do you see the quiet confidence which radiates from his relaxed yet intense position over the clay and the wheel? He has been there before and knows the joy, the sense of excitement and pride in his work. He loves the feel of the clay moving between his fingers, knows the exact pressure needed to form the lip. Not too little or too much, just the confident, controlled effort of his hands with the clay. What joy, what satisfaction, what pride. Are you the craftsman?

## **Not Always So**

Yet, from a craftsman's viewpoint, it has not always been so. He almost quit, quit forever. He was frustrated, humiliated, sometimes just downright mad, because he couldn't mold the clay like he wanted it. It seemed so easy for his teacher. A little tug here and a little twist there and a piece of pottery was formed before his eyes. He had been like the boy in the baseball cap, eyes bulging, mouth open, amazed!

## **His Skill Progressed**

As beginning skills progressed he became overjoyed that he could make things exact duplicates of models made by his teacher. He learned the "easy

tricks,” and soon could mass produce a number of exact copies. His teacher went on to more difficult techniques, not easy tricks, techniques that only could be learned from long hours of practice. Practice and total failure. Practice and almost total failure. Practice and total failure again. The student lapsed back into skill areas where previously he had found success. But the joy was all gone. It was “blah.” His interest waned. He spent less time at learning and more time in daydreaming. He became the girl with the long flowing hair.

## **Improve or Regress**

The would-be craftsman looked around for something else. What could take the place or fill the void that the activity had left? Something, anything, please be there! He became the boy directly behind the craftsman.

Then came mental decay. He once looked forward to the next day, the next lesson, the next challenge, the next new experience that came from the day. Now everything was dull, uninspiring, an all-grey experience. Anything new? I'll look, but I'm not going to get involved because “*I've learned.*” He became like the others, standing with arms folded.

## **I've Learned**

What had he learned? He learned there is no short cut to the mastery of an art form. No tricks, no hidden secrets that make you an instant craftsman. And that knowledge drove him from trying because he did not realize why he came to the pottery class in the first place. Why did he? And why do we? We all come for a variety of reasons as personal as our names.<sup>1</sup> I come for praise of my finished product. If it doesn't look like the “store-bought” model, I feel I've failed. Don't judge me. So do you sometimes. Others come to play in an old-new medium, clay. They haven't played with clay since grammar school, and their memory of those times were good. So they come to recreate the past. Others come for various reasons: peer pressure, status, boredom, to socialize, and many more.

## **Desires and Needs**

To be effective, organizations offering programs for the leisure time of individuals (such as recreation services, chapels, etc.) need a total view of a person's desires and needs. And staff members can learn such needs only after the establishment of close, personal relationships so that the participant feels comfortable in confiding about his emotional, inner, personal feelings.

If such staffs only concern themselves with offering a smorgasbord of activities at the arm-folding (spectator) or let-me-try (beginning level),

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<sup>1</sup> Jay B. Nash, *Philosophy of Recreation and Leisure*, (Dubuque: Wm. C. Brown Co., 1973), p. 89.

they are meeting only a part of the desires of the participants. Complete needs aren't fulfilled until the staff develops the close, personal bonds with participants that allow free exchange of inner feelings.<sup>2</sup> This is not philosophical! It's human nature. It's life. It's a participant who would venture to say, "Would you teach me more about ceramics?" It's other participants who would ask the same about painting, music, dancing, etc. In other words, we have an opportunity to help the person develop a Leisure Ethic for his life.

## Leisure Ethic

A Leisure what? A Leisure Ethic! Everyone has one. Most simply don't know what it looks like. A Leisure Ethic is the set of beliefs that controls how you are going to use your free time.<sup>3</sup> It is tied to the total fiber of your being. It can't be separated out and looked at clinically, like surgically removing your heart from your body and examining it. The Leisure Ethic is embodied in your concept of time, the most precious commodity you have, expended in twenty-four hour gulps, never to be regained. How you spend that time determines, in large measure (if not totally), the quality of your life.<sup>4</sup>

Chaplains would do well to examine attitudes they may convey unconsciously, *e.g.*, leisure is more susceptible to "sin" than work, or leisure is a non-productive time for an individual and, therefore, better to be avoided. Staffs of chapels, recreation services, etc., need to help individuals constructively use free time to become better persons through activities offered. They are compelled (they have no choice) to look at the total being—physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual. For in his play man reveals himself.

## Use of Time

Historians have written volume after volume concerning the rise and fall of great nations.<sup>5</sup> They have cataloged, in great detail, the accomplishments of those now deceased: the Great Pyramids of Egypt, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, the Colossus of Rhodes, etc. Most historians also list one common reason for the fall of each of those nations. Do you know what the one common reason is? Time! No nation, in all history has long stood when its people failed to use their "free" time for building rather than tearing down. To build up is the mission of any organization concerned with leisure or free time. Too many programs simply occupy idle time with frivolous activities. The constructive use of free time with meaningful activities

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<sup>2</sup> Richard A. Kass and Howard E. A. Tinsley, "Leisure Activities and Need Satisfaction: A Replication and Extension," Research Update, *Parks & Recreation*, (Arlington: National Recreation and Park Association, 1978), Vol. 13, No. 11, p. 49.

<sup>3</sup> Sebastian de Grazia, *Of Time, Work, and Leisure*, (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1964).

<sup>4</sup> Albert Elliott, "The Arts in Recreation," *Georgia Recreator*, (Atlanta: Georgia Recreation and Park Society, Inc., 1977), Vol. 6, No. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Adriano Tilgher, *Homo Faber*, (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1958).

makes one look forward to the challenges of a new day.

But what happened to the would-be craftsman we were discussing?

## The Craftsman

We left him with arms folded, a spectator. He read the notice of the "Rec-A-Rama Information Display Day" to be held on Saturday, 11 June 1977. Art Emerson would demonstrate the potters' wheel. And the craftsman remembered. Not the overwhelming flood of feelings he had so long ago, but at least a remembrance. He went. A spectator. Arms folded. But as Art began the demonstration, the craftsman remembered more. Oh, how he remembered! (It's magnificent that God made us that way: to remember the good and forget the bad). His arms unfolded. He stepped closer to the wheel. His eyes focused on the hands of the potter. His mouth opened. And then it happened. Art, the recreation services' staff member, looked into the face of the would-be craftsman. He saw, and he understood the feeling. And Art said, "Would you like to try it?" A friendship began, a relationship that would deal with the total being: his desires, his hopes, his frustrations, his rekindled spirit—his *needs*. Art would listen and understand because he viewed his position in recreation services as *More Than Just Play*. It is the shaping of lives.

And the craftsman became . . .

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# My Journey

Pats H. Hanner

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It happened one morning, while I was involved routinely in yoga exercises. A strange time for God to break through, perhaps. Still I had a strong feeling of being called—called to be an artist, called to minister through art. Called to be what I was happiest already being? How absurd! But let me review how that evolved, how that journey found its course.

When, where, and how does the dream to paint have its beginning? Was it during that childhood sense of wonder over being a part of God's beautiful creation? Maybe it was simply the coloring books, crayons and paints mother supplied. Or was it that high school teacher who gave me the freedom to be creative and encouraged me to try new ideas, if only to experience the result? Or a college professor who saw a gift, and more than that, a love for art?

Perhaps the dream had always been there. It was a dream somehow to be able to put one's inner awareness on canvas. Though I became involved in being a wife, mother, and church worker, the dream remained. The occasional opportunity to view a Michelangelo sculpture, Rembrandt portrait or a cathedral by Monet stirred the dream again. With Monet it has always been his power and understanding of color that stirs me. But the mastery of the medium and the moment captured in Michelangelo's "Pieta" brought me to my knees in tears of awe.

Such artists always have quickened a place inside me that cries, "Paint! Paint! Paint! Show the world, if you can, what God, *the* Creator, is like. Bring others to that mystical experience of knowing Him through art."

A crisis that reminded me of the inevitability of my own death brought the dream into focus, created the motivating drive to make it reality. Knowing I had not yet lived, I began listening to God within the inner self.

I asked Him for two gifts: to be able to paint and to be able to develop that deep, inner life with Him. This became a single journey, each element feeding the other. It was a development of oneness, of unity between theology and art and between myself and God.

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Pats Hanner, a homemaker and mother of four in Columbia, MD, is representative of a growing number of individuals who have rediscovered artistic media as meaningful expressions of religious faith. The wife of the Rev. Al Hanner, Director of Field Ministries for *Faith at Work*, she also teaches a course on meditation for the "Second Touch Workshop" in the same program.

The desire to paint became the motivation to set aside things that normally consumed my time. I allowed myself art lessons and time to paint, in spite of other demands and responsibilities. I was able to let go of the "perfectionist homemaker" and allow the spiritual self, the artist to grow.

My very first lessons were not only fun, they sparked a growing joy. Despite difficult times and frustration over flaws, an encouraging instructor and a desire to share the beauty I felt kept me painting.

Even in the beginning there was excitement in experimenting with hues, in learning to create depth and feeling. It was a thrill to discover what I could do. I needed that knowledge and skill-development to portray clearly what I saw, what was inside me. And there was unspeakable delight when other people began to recognize those things in my paintings.

At the same time, the gift of a deep, inner life with God began to develop through study and meditation. Sitting quietly and listening for that still, small voice brought me to a growing realization that there is a God within. I began to accept God's creation of me as good. Good could and would come from within.

As my inner life with God deepened, paintings evolved. Beginning with my first painting, there was the desire to express the inner vision, the struggle to sketch it, and finally the attempt to put it on canvas. It became a simple sanctuary with an overlay of the Christ with out-stretched arms. It flowed quickly and easily.

But the significance of the painting was not the technique. It had come from the inner creative unity with God. It was "given." Incredibly, I later learned the painting nearly matched the sanctuary of a nearby monastery.

The experience of feeling that a painting was actually "given" to me moved me to seek new knowledge and techniques. My next instructor introduced me to theory that enhanced my sense of color. She helped me to detail God's world realistically by painting from photographs.

It was her encouragement as well as my family's that helped me continue to paint. They helped me accept the fact that I was not a master artist but that I did possess a natural ability that was learning how to express itself.

Once, while participating in a group exercise, I was asked what I would save if my house caught on fire. Without hesitation, I announced my first choice as my easel. With that exercise I discovered how uniquely "me" I felt while painting. I realized that painting is something I share with myself and with God. I am most centered in the "creative within" at the easel.

Along with my personal growth in being centered and in allowing myself to be open to mystical experiences, came an awareness of the God within each of us. We are created differently, and each has creative gifts. It may be the ability to create a warm atmosphere, an inviting room, an informative report, or a close relationship.

Through meditation, I also became aware of a desire, a longing to be part of God's creativeness. I became willing to allow Him to create through



me. Continually I struggle to get my ego out of the way in order to allow that to happen.

Then came that day of ultimate commitment, to my spiritual journey and to my paintings. I had set that day apart to be with God in quietness. By the end of that day I had answered the call. I committed five hours each day, five days a week, to a ministry of painting. There was awe, wonder and fear at such a commitment. What would I have to give up? What would others think? Was I being self-indulgent in allowing a “luxury” to become the priority of my life?

The commitment was a gift and a struggle. I would have to be willing to say “yes” to Him who said “yes” to me. I would have to resist the pull of old ways: the *need* to do housework, to call a friend, to go to a meeting. It would require discipline to stay with that call. The call came nearly two years ago and the “old ways” still pull.

To add to the difficulty, there are those days when it’s plain, hard work to get the paint to look right, when it must be scraped off or painted over. There are times when, after hours of work, the finished painting is worthless. I’m learning to accept these times as a normal part of the journey.

But there are other times when I have experienced the excitement of watching a painting become a statement. The atmosphere surrounding an old Maryland railroad station changed from day to twilight as light from the station windows grew brighter than the sky. As I painted, I saw, in the mind’s eye, an old man in work clothes leaning against the dilapidated building—as if waiting. Even while I painted, I wondered what he was waiting for. The answer came: “He waits for life!” He was I, and others who too often have stood waiting, as if life were something to come, to happen later.

With that painting I began to sense creation. I learned to allow a painting to have a life of its own.

One day I was painting a church and graveyard. I had felt drawn to paint the scene, but I had difficulties with the perspective of the church, its bell tower, the large oak tree, the tombstones. Still I knew there was something special about that painting. It was more than a scenic church and graveyard, but I fought the awareness. Then, quite unexpectedly, the newly completed painting fell off a cabinet. One spot was smeared, a bush which I was forced to wipe off. The next morning what was to replace that bush evolved during meditation. I replaced the smeared bush with a tombstone. In front of the tombstone knelt a person. Behind it was the shadow of another, surrounded with light. Even I didn’t know the message immediately. What was it trying to say? The next morning, again during meditation, I was given the title: “The Unheard Conversation.” I realized the significance. In spite of the reality of death, there is also a reality of eternal life, both now and after the grave. The resurrection is not just for Christ, but for all God’s beings. Some will understand. Others will not. I am comfortable with it being so.

Again, driven by a need to improve my skills, I sought to learn the techniques of the masters. The new instructor registered surprise at how little training I had had. Her recognition reaffirmed my conviction that what I had was a gift of God. This gift is not mine to own, but mine to share and let God use. I am learning to claim that gift, to rejoice in the work it produces, and to declare the works have value.

Encouraged by the initial sales of my work, I have set a goal for a one-woman show in October 1979—the second anniversary of my call. There is both joy and fear in “going public.” I have joy in acknowledging that my works are worth showing. I have fear over possible criticism or public feedback. But I also have a feeling that public response doesn’t really matter. What really matters is using the gift God has given.

One of my latest paintings represents reaching a goal I had not dared to anticipate: of letting symbols flow onto the canvas without conscious practice of technique.

It was during a worship service one Advent Sunday that the painting evolved in my mind’s eye. I saw the manger and the Babe in the midst of a bright light. At the edges of that light was a rainbow. I followed the arch upward. It seemed to be breaking through a prism from a narrower beam of brilliant light above. Two angels appeared, standing in the darkness at the edges of the rainbow. Then, during the singing of the Communion hymn, the prism evolved into a crown of thorns. The resultant painting symbolizes the culmination of God’s promise to sustain life (the rainbow) through this Babe. It is only through His crucifixion that the significance of His birth is revealed. Through this painting, God says (at least to me), “My light has broken through Christ to be loose in the world for you to see and for you to be.” I have titled it: “Hope, Joy and Good Will to Man, Unending.” Thanks be to God for all His blessings!

# The Spiritual Benefits of Poetry

William Brower, M.A.

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About a quarter of a century ago, Dr. Charles Osgood gave a series of lectures at Princeton Theological Seminary, called *Poetry As a Means of Grace*. The lectures were good; the title was unforgettable. It sums up for me what poetry is all about. A good poem is a source of help by which we may become better and stronger persons. In this article, I will reflect on the function of poetry in the lives of those who hear it, aloud or in their own silent reading. My purpose is to move you to read good poems and share them, to receive the blessing of good poetry and pass it on to others. I also will make some observations about the writing of poetry as a promising form of therapy.

## A Review of My Own Experience

The experiencing of poetry is, of course, *subjective* at the point where we react emotionally, the point where our spirits are touched. Objectivity is possible when we look at a text and think about the logical content, but feelings imply subjectivity. So I must speak about the benefits of poetry in *my own* experience, believing that I am (as the lawyers say) a person of reason and prudence, a person from whom we may generalize about other people.

Poetry has been a means of grace to me. From the innocuous exposure to nursery rhymes and street-game chants I came, about the age of seven, to an important discovery—a poem that gave me feelings of excitement and mystery. It was about a woodsman standing at night beside his campfire. Author: forgotten; exact text: forgotten; general impression: indelible. My pleasure in that poem grew partly from a fine painting used as an illustration for it. They expressed each other. As with that earliest connecting of poem and picture, I have always found good poems enriched by the powerful visual images they stimulate; in fact all my senses are involved in encountering good poetry.

Around the same age, I read Robert W. Service's *Rhymes of a Red Cross Man*, and felt childish empathy with the suffering doughboys. Next

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William Brower is Associate Director of Speech, and Secretary of the General Faculty, at Princeton Theological Seminary. He was an actor on stage and television before joining the Princeton faculty. He is a specialist in spoken poetry, particularly the works of Robert Frost.

came Edgar Allan Poe's mysterious "The Raven," and the strange music of "Annabel Lee" and "The Bells." I started a lifelong practice of memorizing with those three works of Poe. An old-fashioned heartbreaker, "Little Boy Blue" by Eugene Field, was the first poem that moved me to tears:

The little toy dog is covered with dust,  
But sturdy and stanch he stands;  
And the little toy soldier is red with rust,  
And his musket moulds in his hands.

.....

And they wonder, as waiting the long  
years through,  
In the dust of that little chair,  
What has become of our Little Boy Blue,  
Since he kissed them and put them there.<sup>1</sup>

Then came the solemn, heroic dignity of a poem my grandfather told me about—"The Bivouac of the Dead." It was a dirge by a soldier in the Confederate Army, Theodore O'Hara. Its opening lines, and in some cases the whole text, appear on monuments in many national cemeteries. The famous first stanza is imprinted with radiance on my mind:

The muffled drum's sad roll has beat  
The soldier's last tattoo.  
No more on Life's parade shall meet  
That brave and fallen few.  
On Fame's eternal camping ground  
Their silent tents are spread,  
And Glory guards with solemn round  
The bivouac of the dead.<sup>2</sup>

My child's spirit was learning about the grace that can be worked in us through the experience of poetic catharsis.

There soon followed, as I reached adolescence, the joyful harmony of my boyhood infatuations and the love poetry by masters like A. E. Housman, Sara Teasdale, W. B. Yeats, Rupert Brooke, Elizabeth Browning; and the deep pleasure of my youthful idealism finding its echo in the works of earlier poets like Wordsworth and Longfellow.

I reached a spiritual milestone of powerful significance when I encountered the work of Sidney Lanier. Again the joining of personal sensory and emotional experience with a poem's images struck transcendent chords in my being. I had been on a summer visit to Sea Island, Georgia, and had fallen in love with a girl I met there. (I was sure it was forever!) Later that summer I read for the first time Lanier's "The Marshes of Glynn." He had written of the mysterious beauty that surrounded Sea Island, the very marshes I had contemplated, at dawn and dusk and in the "noon-day fire."

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<sup>1</sup> Eugene Field, "Little Boy Blue," from *The Poems of Eugene Field* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950) pp. 248-249.

<sup>2</sup> Theodore O'Hara, "The Bivouac of the Dead," from *An American Anthology*, edited by E. C. Stedman (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968) p. 248.

Ye marshes, how candid and simple  
and nothing-withholding and free  
Ye publish yourselves to the sky  
and offer yourselves to the sea!

. . . . .

Oh, like to the greatness of God  
is the greatness within  
The range of the marshes, the liberal  
marshes of Glynn.<sup>3</sup>

What a soaring of my spirit, when I heard his voice singing from the beyond. That was nearly forty years ago. I think I am still a better person for Lanier's gift of that poem. He enriched my spirit with his vision.

Teachers had an important effect in strengthening my bonds with the poets. I recall with special affection Professor Dan Norton at the University of Virginia. On V-J Day he gave my English class a deeply humane perspective on the death of young men in war. Instead of coming into class all grins and hurrahs, he walked in slowly, sat down, and read to us Wilfred Owen's meditation on soldiers' sacrifice—"Anthem for Doomed Youth." Hearing it read in that context was a mystical experience.

I will always remember with gratitude a meeting with the novelist Edison Marshall, in the spring of 1943, when I was an impressionable seventeen. He took time to listen to some of my own writing, and then talked with me for hours about the great poets who had most impressed him. He spoke from memory his most cherished lines from Shakespeare and Shelley and Keats. His inspiration lingers to this day, and refreshes my sense of the grandeur and metaphysical power of the greatest poetry.

As a teacher of oral interpretation, I have experienced the work of hundreds of poets since those days. Perhaps one in a hundred poems I read, or hear, has an enriching effect on me. I work through volumes like a treasure hunter on a vast beach. The hunt involves wading through tedious, often polluted mud flats, sometimes garbage. But it is worth doing because there inevitably comes the hidden treasure—the poem that builds and strengthens me, and comforts and inspires me. The best poetry nourishes the soul.

## How To Reap the Benefits

If you have followed a similar path in your experience of poetry, I am only confirming what you know. If poetry turns you off (or, more likely, someone turned poetry off for you), I urge you to give it another chance. If you are neutral about its value, trust my claim that it has great spiritual potential.

As you set out to widen your knowledge and appreciation, be forewarned that there *are* those mud flats, and garbage heaps, to be struggled through as you search for the treasures. The old-fashioned, often

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<sup>3</sup> Sidney Lanier, "The Marshes of Glynn" from *Poems of Sidney Lanier* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons 1929) p. 17.

maudlin, heavy-on-the-rhythm-and-rhyme genre won't be a significant problem; it has almost disappeared, except from the pages of the magazines at the supermarket checkout counter. You are far more likely, as you browse at the poetry section in a bookstore, to be confronted with arty efforts like this:

I  
What gunk is/was turni  
NG  
Decide? WHO fell  
Ring the urine's YELLOW  
All       retch  
LOVE

You may recognize this as typical of the myriad attempts by writers who, given the right connections at the university press, the chic magazine's editorial office, or the New York publishing house, often get printed, even praised, even anthologized. (A large number of such poems contain an obligatory scatter of the three or four most notorious Anglo-Saxon obscenities.) This absurd phenomenon has its counterpart in the world's great museums, where we may see cacophonous splatters of paint, or canvases showing one solid color and maybe a couple of wavy lines, with interchangeable titles like "Protest IV" or "Phyllis at the Cape." In all the arts, not least poetry, there are vast wardrobes of the Emperor's new clothes.

In spite of all such counterfeits, the authentic, redeeming moments will come. Every now and then, you will find a poem with a heart, a soul, a vibrant living *persona*—a poem that will take hold of you and grant you grace. It is a kind of "sharing the good news" to *share these poetic treasures with people you know*, just as the poet shared them with you. It is spirit speaking to spirit: I tell you my most intimate secrets. I confess my deepest fears, joys, and longings. I reverently look at something or someone and tell you about it in a poem, as an act of communion. I hope you will share it with others—links in a liberating chain of grace.

W. H. Auden ended one of his finest poems with this exhortation:

Follow, poet, follow right  
To the bottom of the night,  
With your unconstraining voice  
Still persuade us to rejoice;  
With the farming of a verse  
Make a vineyard of the curse,  
Sing of human unsuccess  
In a rapture of distress;  
In the deserts of the heart  
Let the healing fountain start,  
In the prison of his days  
Teach the free man how to praise.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> W. H. Auden, "In Memory of William Butler Yeats," from *Collected Poetry of W. H. Auden*, (Random House, Inc. 1940) p. 142.

In a way the lines apply also to us who read or hear the poems, because when we in turn share them, we sustain their truth and beauty, and may thus become a means of grace to others.

## Poetry Writing As a Form of Therapy

A highly promising area of recent experimentation is the writing of poetry as therapy. An individual or group making such an effort might well resolve, like Albany in *King Lear*, to "speak what we feel, not what we ought to say." That is a contract which should lead everyone to try to *tell the truth*. The quality of the writing is secondary to the therapeutic effect that may issue from this form of self-expression.

Poetry writing as therapy produced the following reflection by a man who had a resentful memory of a military superior.

Some day I won't  
Hate  
Sgt. Nitske any more.  
But I'll still remember  
His gleaming teeth when he smiled,  
And the wet tip of his tongue  
just showing,  
When he laughed his little hissing laugh.  
What a friend we had in Nitske.  
He taught us to obey, yes he did.  
If somebody served me his eyeballs fried  
I think I could swallow them whole.

Ideally, making such a poetic statement would have a purgative effect on the client-poet who wrote it. At the very least it would provide human data for the counsellor or therapy group to explore sympathetically, with an aim of ministering to that same client-poet.

Similarly, the following text might well provide helpful insights about the mental and emotional states of the client-poet.

I will be a bleached skull  
Lying lost on the desert floor.  
Chipmunks will explore my eye sockets.  
An adder will bury itself  
In the sand under my shadow  
And wait for prey.  
In windstorms I will roll a few feet;  
In a rare ferocious storm  
I will spin and bounce  
And leave my jaw behind.  
I will come to rest against a rock.  
I will not know.

Psycho-drama has proven its value in many counselling situations. Poetry writing as therapy may well do the same.

## Summary

Since early childhood I have enjoyed the spiritual benefits of good poetry. Wide exposure has refined my taste, so that I think I know a really fine poem when I read one. Certainly I know when I have been touched by its wisdom and beauty.

Poetry is the art of saying, in a distilled essence, something of deep importance to the author. It deals with thoughts and feelings of ultimate significance. It is often mysterious, and sometimes mystical, even when its subject is no larger than a flower growing in a "crannied wall," or a frail bird on a bleak winter day. Making seriously conceived poems may even be looked on as a theological discipline; to paraphrase Kafka, poetry is a form of prayer.

We can nourish our spirits by finding good poetry and sharing it. Some of us will have opportunity, as pastoral counsellors, to use the writing and sharing of poems as a form of therapy.



## Creative Music: An Artful Aid to Worship

Master Sergeant Lester B. Gibbs

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It is my hope that the following observations will help those involved in ministries of music on military installations and will increase appreciation for their positions, especially in relationship to other chapel staff positions.

The military chapel provides a unique setting. During the past twenty years I have experienced an entire gamut of feelings—emotional and physical—as a choir director, organist and combination of the two in situations that involved Jewish, Roman Catholic and Protestant congregations in both denominational and ecumenical settings.

The scriptures, particularly the Psalms, tell us singing and playing of instruments were common expressions of joy in daily life. From birth through death, and even beyond the grave, musical expression is cited. Our own forebearers seem to have been uninhibited creatures, shouting for joy, clapping hands, dancing, singing and playing various instruments, often as a significant part of their worship and praise. Such acts are vividly portrayed in stained glass windows of ancient, European cathedrals. They are symbols to every age that man and his music share integral roles in his spiritual life.

### Preparing for the Music Experience

As I indicated, the military chapel offers a unique setting in which music can play a major part in uplifting or giving life to the community's total spiritual experience. Through the proper use of funds, each chapel should be able to provide a music program that really enhances and serves the congregation to which it ministers. Too often we only look for volunteer organists or music directors, and in the process, lose sight of our mission. Only on rare occasions can we find *qualified* individuals willing to donate time and talent to the music program in a leadership position. In the civilian community, where a strong emphasis may be placed on stewardship of time and talent, the volunteer approach is often the accepted rule. But this same

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Master Sergeant Gibbs (soon to be promoted to Sergeant Major) is presently serving as Chapel Activities Supervisor, Headquarters, Fifth United States Army, Ft. Sam Houston, Texas. He has exercised his musical talents since early childhood, becoming the student director for his school's band and chorus by the time he was a junior in high school. During his 20 years of active duty he has served numerous congregations with his skills. He is presently serving as the Minister of Music and Education at the Alamo Heights Baptist Church in San Antonio.

rule may not be necessary or wise in the military congregation made up of persons from many denominations for a general Protestant service.

(Let me interject a special note of caution at this point: as music programs receive increased support from appropriated funds, care must be taken to insure that military personnel are not drawn into conflicts of interest by receiving dual government checks. Contracts can still be drawn up using non-appropriated funds. In both cases, however, the local Staff Judge Advocate should be contacted for advice.)

Assuming you've already decided the music program is a vital part of the chapel ministry, let me suggest some basic ideas that may save many hours of frustration and anxiety. Some picture language in agricultural terms can be related to the effort.

## **Getting the Tools Ready**

Providing music for a military chapel is not easy. In selecting and briefing a music director, the broad representation of cultural backgrounds, religious denominations and ethnic preferences on the post must be considered.

To prevent misunderstandings, the music director needs a clear set of ground rules to work from—a job description that clearly defines the scope of the position, responsibilities for program development, and above all, a clear definition of the relationship with the supervisory chaplain, members of the chapel staff and other musicians supporting the worship service. In a schematic drawing, the music director would come under the supervision of the chaplain responsible for the chapel program, and all other music positions would come under the music director. A coordination line also should be drawn between the music director and the senior chapel activities specialist/supervisor providing administrative and logistical support for the program.

## **Selecting the Seeds**

Let's face it. God didn't give each of us the ability to sing. Some of us only make a joyful noise—not always a pleasing song. *Auditions* for an all-volunteer choir can produce long range benefits. Those not selected can be encouraged to apply their talents in other areas of the chapel program. The fact that they even came to an audition is an indication they want to be involved in chapel activities.

To have a choir full of monotones, or just one or two loud voices, has a negative effect on any congregation regardless of the spiritual commitment of the singers. Imagine what would happen if the chaplain decided to invite the first person who entered the chapel on Sunday morning to take his place and deliver the sermon! That's precisely what happens to the music director when someone volunteers, is volunteered, or is "invited" to sing without prior coordination or preparation. The individual may be a great singer, but that decision should be left to the music director.

Don't misunderstand me. There are times when a volunteer has outstanding talent and definitely can add to a service. Prior arrangement can be made if the music program is flexible. In most instances, though, where the program is taken seriously, the music has been planned carefully in advance. Sudden changes usually have adverse effects.

When selecting members it's not necessary to limit the choir to music sight-readers only. Many individuals have a good "ear" for music and can learn parts quickly. Simple tonal exercises easily identify that ability. Additional time spent teaching the choir to sight-read, however, opens new doors of ministry and adds vitality to the group.

## **Preparing the Soil**

Your "choir" may be a duet! Remember, "Where two or three . . ." Despite the number of people in the group, however, what can be done to help them offer their talents in ways that enhance worship? Basic preparation and planning. Just as we cultivate and fertilize soil to prepare it for seed, choir members need basic preparation for participation in worship services.

When the choir is visible to the congregation and discipline is not maintained, their presence can actually be a stumbling block to effective worship. Poor appearance, lack of uniformity, ragged standing and sitting, and unnecessary movement can distract from or interfere with the atmosphere for worship. When the choir is located in the rear of the chapel, noise discipline is a major issue. In the chancel area, it's amazing how one person picking his teeth can capture the attention of most of the congregation. Meanwhile, the pastor wonders why he's unable to hold the concentration of his audience.

## **Planting the Seed**

In some cases, the reputation of a given chapel or choral group is so well known that they have little difficulty in sustaining the choir with regular and strong members. Chapels located in training units, however, normally don't enjoy this stability. For directors in such situations, the not-so-simple act of making a joyful noise can turn into a nerve-shattering experience, a battle of wits, or even an outright conflict with other members of the chapel staff. And when these directors are individuals unfamiliar with the transient life on a military installation, their positions can be filled with even more frustration and misgivings. A lot of "warm fuzzies" need to be applied regularly. Prior planning may not help in these situations, but open channels of communication and a good understanding of congregational needs may save the day.

In most cases, however, the music and liturgy should be compatible. This requires close coordination between those responsible for the spoken word and those providing instrumental and choral support. Recently I had an opportunity to watch this interaction at the New Post Chapel, Fort Sill, Oklahoma. A guest chaplain was scheduled to conduct some future services and had requested the choir to prepare a particular anthem. The music

director explained his theme for the service at the beginning of the choir practice, thus setting the tone for the rehearsal that followed. Future plans also were discussed for an outdoor service and the specific role the choir would have in that service. The organist also was included as an integral part of the worship experience. As a consequence, the service followed a theme completely. It supported the spoken word and involved lay readers, congregation, choir and pastor in a spiritually fulfilling happening.

Still, if the channels of communication are open, options can be exercised when change is necessary. If alternate plans are made to provide instrumental or congregational involvement when the choir cannot perform, the order of worship need not suffer.

## **The Seed Grows and Bears Fruit**

Earlier I mentioned the cultural make-up of the congregation. Unlike many civilain churches, the military chapel provides an atmosphere for vast musical variety. Funds and talent are normally available to provide a variety of instrumentalists, soloists, ensembles and singing groups to augment a local chapel choir. A visit to the installation's teen club can provide good leads for small bands or combos that could support a youth musical. The post's band offers a source for instrumentalists. Even the local school (often located on the installation) can provide both vocal, instrumental and drama resources. And don't overlook drama and other talent sponsored by the post recreational program.

Larger military posts often have ongoing gospel and folk choirs that can provide a wide variety of music in support of individual chapel programs. While smaller installations are limited in on-post talent, they may be able to draw from the local community. Such talent-sharing is too often limited, in the Christian tradition, to Easter and Christmas. (While singing in the Patrick Henry Village Chapel Choir in Heidelberg, Germany, under the direction of Guenter Mohrig, we were constantly challenged to learn new music. But equally important for me was the fact that it led to my involvement in the German-American Kantorie, another group directed by Herr Mohrig, and increased my awareness of the bonds of friendship that can be formed through music.)

## **Sharing the Fruit of Our Labors**

Once a music program has been established, the challenge of sharing the wealth with others becomes the goal. Ties with the community can be strengthened through willing participation in local music events. In fact, if local talent is limited, invite the community to attend programs presented in the chapel.

Fort Myer, Virginia, serves as an excellent example. Because of its proximity to Arlington National Cemetery, it draws visitors from all over the world and their chapel programs support a music ministry recognized throughout the Washington, D.C. area for its quality of music performed.

But Myer is not the only post where such opportunities exist. There are historic chapels throughout the country which, unfortunately, remain unused except for services. Beautiful pipe organs remain idle except for Sunday worship, a few weddings or an occasional funeral. We have paid a lot of attention to creative ministries during the past few years but have frequently overlooked the available opportunities for ministry through music.

The forms of sacred music are as varied as the congregations we serve. But we have the resources to explore those forms and relate them to our specific situations. I have often wondered what would have happened if Johann Sebastian Bach and Ralph Carmichael had lived next door to each other in the same era. Each made his own style of sacred music strongly felt the world over. And both have met rejection in many churches. The point is that every composer, from the psalmist to today's authors, has spoken to a particular set of hearts and minds and lifted them to new plateaus of spiritual awareness. Plainsong, chants, chorales, hymns, spirituals, folk songs, etc., are media through which the written word has been expressed in song. Sung acapella, or accompanied by organ, piano, guitar or other instruments, the message remains the same.

## **Grafting May Improve the Fruit**

As we look for new ways of ministry we must draw from the past, incorporate the present and have a vision of the future. Congregations should not be forced into musical molds that restrict growth. Just as singing the same old familiar hymns month after month can become a bore, so can the same diet of choral music. Repetition restricts growth and the choir members quickly lose interest, unless you specifically organize the choir to specialize in Bach, Handel, Folk-Style, etc. The sensitive choir director will provide a challenging variety of choral selections that stimulate both choir and congregation.

A few years ago I had prepared a choir to sing a rather difficult four-part anthem with a soprano solo. When Sunday morning dawned, unfortunately, only two men arrived for practice. Nevertheless, an accomplished organist and strong soprano and alto sections were able to provide a rapidly improvised version of the hymn "Have Thine Own Way, Lord."<sup>1</sup> On the last stanza the organist played tonal variations on the theme while the women sang in unison. Amazingly, the congregational response was overwhelming! Prior to that time, I had not used "familiar" hymn tunes or arrangements for anthems. In subsequent services the congregation was invited to suggest hymns they would like to hear, and once monthly an anthem was selected from their requests. The names of those requesting the "special" anthem were printed in the worship bulletin. This simple act

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<sup>1</sup> Adelaide A. Pollard, 1862 - 1934, author, George C. Stebbins, 1846 - 1945, composer; (Words and music copyright 1907. Renewal 1935 extended by G.C. Stebbins: Hope Publishing Company).

involved both choir and congregation in the selection and presentation of the anthem.

When planning choral selections or hymns for worship, we might revive a practice of the early church. Consider this observation from a letter written in the year 115 A.D. to the Emperor Trajan by Pliny the Younger:

They all stand up together, and . . . two choruses are formed . . . , the one of men and the other of women, and for each chorus there is a leader . . . selected, who is the most honorable and most excellent of the band. Then they sing hymns which have been composed in honor of God in many meters and tunes, at one time all singing together and at another answering one another in a skillful manner.<sup>2</sup>

If practiced today, this form of antiphonal singing might make hymns more interesting. Grape growers follow a practice of grafting new vines to an existing root system that has proven hardy. Music directors, too, can develop new styles of music within old and stable congregations through careful experimentation and "grafting."

## **The Harvest**

The liturgical year provides an abundance of possibilities to develop in any chapel setting. The key to success rests jointly with the chaplain responsible for coordinating the religious program and the music director appointed to lead the music; through proper application, music can be the mortar that holds a worship service together. In the average Sunday service, music, after all, occupies more time than any other part of the order of worship except the sermon. It is a segment of the worship experience that cannot be overlooked. Through foresight and planning, it can broaden the base of the religious program, involve various age groups and increase the appreciation and understanding for musical forms too often misunderstood or forgotten.

Regardless of our faith group, we all share a spiritual ancestry that has proclaimed the living God through songs of praise and shouts of joy. That legacy is now passed to our generation and we have our opportunity to proclaim scriptural truths and man's hopes through sacred music.

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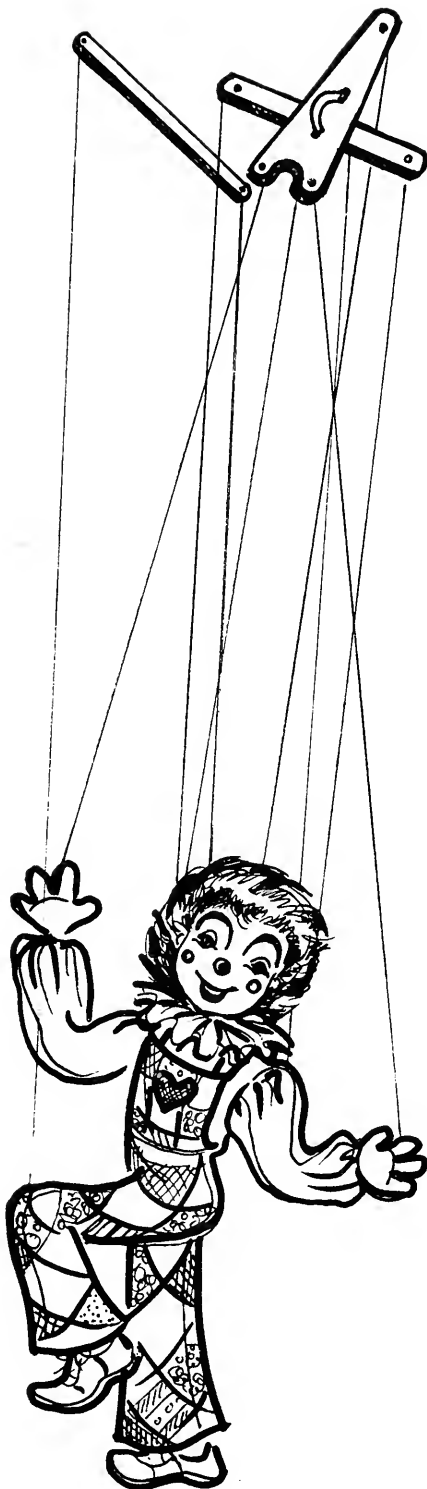
<sup>2</sup> Gustave Reese, *Music in the Middle Ages*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1940), p. 60.

# Puppetry and a Return to Wonder

Sister Adelaide Ortegel

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Puppetry is an ancient art that is ever new, ever intriguing, ever delightful. It seems to have grown from the human need to tell a story. Puppets, above all, are story tellers. They make the story come alive. Sometimes in a funny or entertaining way, sometimes with poignancy or dramatic impact. The puppet-story-telling becomes a communal experience involving puppeteers and audience alike. When it is well done, it is a memorable event with lasting insights. Studies have shown that children retain the memory of live puppet performances longer than any other kind of communication. Children identify strongly with puppet characters. The child is closer to the world of imagination and the essence of creation, where every living and non-living form is able to talk and share feelings. Puppets, however, are not just for children. Through the artistry of puppets, adults are able to put on their "eyes of the child" and



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Sister Adelaide Ortegel (Sister of Providence) is an artist, educator, author and professional puppeteer. She is Associate Director of the Center for Contemporary Celebration, an ecumenical resource center dedicated to the development of the arts in liturgy and life. She has given workshops and seminars in the visual arts and dance throughout this country and Canada.

recapture some of that wonder. Puppets have a special mission in life—to keep us all young in spirit.

## Beginnings

Despite the fact that for most people in America puppets began with “Kukla, Fran and Ollie” and the “Muppets,” puppetry is one of the oldest forms of theatre in the world. We do not know who made the first puppet, but ancient artifacts indicate that they were associated with forms of worship. String-operated clay figures have been found in Egyptian tombs. Animated religious statues have been found in the ruins of Greece and Rome. From earliest times puppetry seems to have been linked with the human need to illustrate, dramatize and communicate religious understandings. Puppets could tell the story centuries before printing, radio and television arrived on the scene. The Chinese had traveling puppeteer storytellers who presented traditional morality plays in village and town. The marionette theatre established in India by 200 B.C. dramatized two great Hindu religious epics, the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. In Southeast Asia, beautifully crafted shadow puppets performed the sacred stories in which gods and heroes interacted to explain the mysteries of life. Puppetry, in many cultures, was considered a sacred art.

The early Christians began using the puppet to relate the Bible stories to the faithful in the catacombs under the city of Rome. After the persecutions ended, the Christians moved the puppets into the churches. Stories of the Creation, the Birth and Life of Christ, the Passion and Death were told with elaborate staging and vivid action. The word “marionette,” meaning “little Mary” came to be used to refer to all jointed figures manipulated by strings. Mary, the Mother of Jesus, was the most popular of the “good” characters. Herod and the Devil were the favorite “evil” characters. They were over-played and became great comics and crowd-pleasers. Due to boisterous excesses, the Council of Trent in 1540 banned the performance of puppet shows in the churches.

Puppeteers continued to present Bible stories and morality plays outside the walls of the church. The characters were dressed in the style of the day and the stories dealt with struggles relevant to Medieval life. Every festival in city and town had its traveling puppet troupe. The Christmas carols also grew with this tradition. Nativity puppet shows would end with dancing in the streets to the joyous carols.

In Europe and Asia, contemporary puppetry has continued to thrive, not just as a folk art, but as an established art form designed for and appreciated by adults. In our own country, puppetry is usually thought of as entertainment for children. It has been used creatively in the classroom and on television as an instructional tool. Those who have attempted to develop puppetry as a serious art form for adult audiences have had to face immense financial difficulties.



## Puppetry: a Valuable Resource

The art of puppetry offers a whole range of creative possibilities for expression. It links the human artist in a unique way with the mystery of God's artistry in creation. The absurdities, the foibles and failings, the hopes and aspirations of the human experience can be seen in the mirror of the puppet microcosm. Like every other art form, puppetry has levels of aesthetic maturity and excellence. It has many degrees of inspiration. It can be parable, morality play, religious drama; it can be fantasy, fable or farce. Puppets are full of surprises. This quality, along with an ability to draw people out of themselves, makes puppets a valuable resource for religious education. Motivation runs high when a new lesson is approached through the use of puppets.

Do puppets have a place in liturgical worship? I believe that they do, if the gathered church family has been opened to an awareness of God speaking to them in many different ways.

In order to design meaningful puppetry for the liturgy, the various styles of puppet design need to be understood. Each type has advantages and limitations. Once a particular style is chosen, there needs to be a commitment of adequate time and energy to the project for developing a mastery of the medium. Otherwise the real value remains hidden and puppetry becomes just another gimmick in which to dabble.

### Kinds of Puppets

A puppet (from the Latin, *pupa* meaning "doll") is more than an animated doll. It is a figure of a person, animal or object that can be animated in order to communicate. The ability to communicate is what distinguishes a puppet from a mechanical dancing toy. The form of communication can run the gamut of human emotions, conflicts and dreams. There are many styles of expression in the way the puppet is designed. Each style has characteristics that are unique to its manner of manipulation.

The **HAND PUPPET** is perhaps the simplest to make and to manipulate. It is worn like a glove. There is a charming perkiness to the movement. The hand puppet can hold things easily since the puppeteers fingers form the arms. Stories with special props and lots of action work well. This style of puppet is usually small and can be handled by young children. A stage can be improvised from available tables, boxes or curtains. It is best used in small group situations rather than with large audiences.

The **MOUTH PUPPET** is also worn on the hand. It has a large flexible mouth that is worked by opening and closing the hand. This puppet is usually made of soft material. The sock-like face can take on an endless variety of human expressions. The mouth puppet is obviously designed for dialogue. It can be a fine narrator or Master of Ceremonies. It thrives on



one-liners, stand-up comedy or “asides” to the audience. The simple mouth puppet can be combined with hand puppets to add the aspect of animated talking that will lend clarity or hilarity to a show.

The **ROD AND MOUTH PUPPET** is a more advanced form of puppet design that has the advantages of larger size and greater versatility. Many of the “Muppets” of television fame are created in this style. Some require two puppeteers, so that mouth, eyes, hands and even feet move when desired. As an individual performer, this kind of puppet is closely related to a ventriloquist’s doll. It can be an excellent story-teller or partner for conversation. The mouth is worked by one hand; the arm becomes the main support of the body. The other hand works slender rods which are attached to the arms of the puppet. One cleverly made puppet of this style can be a marvelous assistant for hospital visits, speaking engagements and any other kind of situation where an ice-breaker is needed.

The **STICK PUPPET** is a figure of any dimension that is elevated on a supporting stick. It can be elaborately made of plywood and fabric, or it can be simply made of cardboard and paper. It is restricted in movement but has the advantage of being able to be seen at great distances. It is a useful medium for procession and pageantry. A banner becomes something of a stick puppet when it is carried in procession. Combined with choir or orchestra, an impressively beautiful effect can be achieved. This type of puppetry can be used with children for simple dramatizations.

**SHADOW PUPPETS** are basic cut-outs or intricate silhouettes that require a light source and a translucent screen. Overhead projectors can also be used for this type of moving image. All kinds of lyrical effects can be achieved using shadows and transparent color materials. Shadow puppets have a dream-like quality. Stories should be chosen carefully for this type of expression.

The **MARIONETTES** or **STRING PUPPETS** offer perhaps the most fascination in movement. They can walk, dance, fly, jump and spin. They can move within the magical area we call a stage or they can capture our imaginations as they move to the skillful manipulation of strings by the puppeteer right before us. It is the most complex style to make and requires a more elaborate stage construction. The marionette has the ability to create that small world of reality that we call “theatre.”

## **Puppetry as a Performing Art in the Church**

The process of making puppets is a worthwhile experience in itself. It calls forth many kinds of creative skills and provides a real sense of accomplishment when the puppet is finished. Books that I have found to be very helpful in the construction of the various kinds of puppets are listed at the end of this article. They are available in public libraries. My purpose in writing this paper is to focus in on puppetry as a performing art that can be used effectively in the ministry.

The touchstone of good puppet performance is in the scripting of the production. In order to write well, the puppeteer needs to be thoroughly familiar with the characteristics of the puppet, that is, what a puppet can do well, and what a puppet cannot do. Next, he or she must have clearly in mind the purpose or key idea to be communicated. Each puppeteer develops a way of bringing the puppet to life and communicating with an audience that is as unique as an individual's handwriting. As creator of the sequence to be presented, the puppeteer may be playwright or editor of existing material. The script must be written especially for puppets. Usually this means limiting the number of characters on the stage at one time, using a good deal of pantomime and action, but not action that involves crossing in front of or behind other puppets very often (the puppeteer is attached to the small actor). Dialogue should be short. Puppets become boring if they are doing the same thing for too long. You can wear your audience out. Scripts should be carefully edited for pacing. I believe the "Punch and Judy" type of slap-stick should be avoided, but good drama is built on conflict and resolution of conflict. Conflict can be expressed without overt violence.

Humor is an especially important element. We are drawn to that which delights us. Laughter is a ministry in itself. While showing me his newly finished puppet, one eight-year-old boy said, "The world would be a whole lot better place if there were more puppets." With the special insight of the child, he had sensed that puppets evoke that which is open and fun in people. Puppets make people laugh at themselves, at their self-importance and strange priorities. Humor is the area of expression that gives puppets the best opportunity to be effective.

Imagine a puppet giving a sermon. What kind of material would be most natural? As a sermon for children, the story-telling style wins rapt attention. This means, of course, that the story must be memorized and projected with dramatic intensity, not just read. If a puppet imitated the way many sermons are given, it could be quite ludicrous. There is the puppet preacher, reading his prepared homily—his voice rising and falling in rehearsed cadences. I am using this as an example of a poor way to use the talents of a puppet in the church, unless it were purposely done for a group of preachers to help them see themselves in action. However, a sermon shared with a puppet person as a dialogue partner could come across with humor and warmth without making a mockery of the message. Puppets do not preach well or lecture well. It is hard to take them seriously. They have a great deal to say about faith, about love, about the way people treat each other, but they say it by drawing you into their reactions and inter-actions. I have seen audiences grow restless when the puppets start to explain the moral to the story. This is better accomplished by talking with the children; asking for their understandings. Puppets have a soft touch; an inviting style, rather than a didactic one.

I spoke with a Director of Religious Education who had developed and produced series of scripts for use with puppets at an Armed Forces'

installation in Germany. The puppets were four large furry animals, who had problems quite similar to those shared by all of us. The Post Chapel had a puppet stage built-in behind the altar. A gold curtain which served as a background hanging for the altar could be opened gracefully for the puppet performance and then closed for the liturgy to continue. The playlets, about fifteen minutes long, became the homily for the Sunday. The scripts were carefully written to draw a contemporary application from the Scripture readings. The puppets were not seen every Sunday, but often enough to build a continuity. The people looked forward to these special Sundays. The children remembered the lessons that their animal friends had learned. They were often referred to in family situations.

This use of puppetry was a creative gathering of resources and personnel available in a given situation. Each situation is different. Another community may find an enthusiastic group of high school students who would like to develop puppetry as part of an out-reach program for nursing home visits or summer Bible classes. Once the idea takes root, the group will need technical assistance and moral support. It takes real teamwork to keep a puppet troupe going.

## Search for Meaning

Through my teaching and work with the *Center for Contemporary Celebration* I have been involved in almost every type of puppet production, including performances for television, Catholic and Protestant worship services, and touring puppet theatre. My constant search is for fresh ways to create puppet parables and puppet dramas that will offer rich levels of meaning. We cannot pour meanings into people. We can only try to awaken that sense of wonder that will help them draw meaning from experience. This capacity to call forth wonder and new awareness is the role of all the arts in religious expression.

Recently I have been developing a combination of clown-mime and marionette as a style of story-telling. This Christmas I shared an original story entitled "The Christmas Gift" with several different congregations. Here is a brief synopsis:

"Patches," a live clown, wanders into the church, up the main aisle, carrying an old satchel and a patchwork pillow, his only earthly possessions. He is trying to figure out what it is all about, this Christmas rush. Why all the shopping, decorating and gift-giving? He doesn't know the story. A voice invites him to read the Christmas Story, which he does, still not fully understanding. The voice invites him over to the puppet stage. The curtain opens revealing an empty manger. One by one, marionette characters from the Nativity story bring gifts to the manger. Finally, "Patches," the clown (this time a marionette version of the real "Patches") enters and looks into the manger. The voice explains that each year we prepare for the coming of Christ into our very own lives. To prepare we get a place ready and try to choose a gift. A real gift comes from the heart. "Patches" tries to think of a gift. He can dance and do tricks, but he's not satisfied. He runs off to get a balloon animal he has made. The voice tells him that it is a nice gift, but asks if it really comes

from his heart. "Patches" admits that he gives balloon animals to everyone. He leaves the stage and becomes the live "Patches," still searching for the right gift. He sees his pillow, hugs it, finally decides that it would make the perfect gift, even if it is hard for him to part with it. He places the pillow gently in the manger, waves good-bye and walks out of the church as the people sing "Go Tell It on the Mountain."

I have received many touching comments from parents on the effect this story had on the family. The children identified with "Patches" and the favorite pillow or blanket. One church group made "Patches the Clown" ornaments for their home Christmas trees. The beauty of it was that adults and children had shared the experience of a story that meant something special to them. It drew upon the familiar, yet also created new symbols.

## Where to Begin?

The place to begin is with the puppets. They can be purchased or handmade. Small group performances spark interest and help the puppeteer develop spontaneity. Discover the resources you may have available in your own staff and congregation. "Patches the Clown" works as a one-person show. A group of two to four puppeteers makes an ideal troupe. Larger groups may be necessary for full-length productions and pageantry.

Your first puppet show may be halting and hectic. Timing, good projection and careful characterization all come with experience. The second attempt will be much better. Sufficient rehearsal is essential; so is a good sound system.

Puppetry is a composite of all the arts, set within a smaller-than-life scale. It will take a great deal of your creative energy and patience, but it is worth all the output when you discover the way it can captivate hearts. The possibilities are limitless. The art of puppetry is still very much of an untapped resource waiting at your fingertips to tell the story.

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# American Jewish Theatre

Norman J. Fedder

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As to the United States: if the Jews withdrew their support, the so-called American Theatre would collapse about next Thursday; and the dislocation caused to the moving and television industries would be catastrophic.<sup>1</sup>

So concluded the world-renowned director, Tyrone Guthrie, in his preface to Mendel Kohansky's 1969 study of Israeli Theatre. William Goldman reinforced this point of view in his book on the 1967 Broadway season:

Of the two dozen American plays to open during the season, at least half were written by Jews. . . . Of the thirty members of the council of the Dramatists' Guild at least two-thirds are Jewish. . . . But the Jewish contribution to the straight play is minimal compared with the musical comedy. . . . In the last half century, the only major gentile composer to come along was Cole Porter. Without Jews, there simply would have been no musical comedy to speak of in America. It is a remarkable contribution.<sup>2</sup>

But has it been a truly *Jewish* one? How much theatre have these American Jews produced which is distinctly expressive of their Jewish heritage? Relatively little. And this despite the fact that, according to Goldman's "conservative guess," Jews—although constituting only 25% of New York's population—account for 50% of its theatre attendance!<sup>3</sup> To be sure, there are a number of plays every season which cater to specifically Jewish interests. But most have been negligible comedies of Jewish family life such as Elick Moll's *Seidman and Son*, Sylvia Regan's *The Fifth Season*, Arnold Shulman's *A Hole in the Head*, Joseph Stein's *Enter Laughing*, Leonard Spigelgass's *Dear Me*, *The Sky Is Falling* and *A Majority of One*. Often vehicles for Jewish popular actors such as Menashe Skulnick or Gertrude Berg, celebrating the joys of Jewish motherhood or the charm of chicken soup, they leave much to be desired as dramatic renderings of the

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<sup>1</sup> Tyrone Guthrie, "Preface," Mendel Kohansky, *The Hebrew Theatre: Its First Fifty Years* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1969), p. v.

<sup>2</sup> William Goldman, *The Season: A Candid Look at Broadway* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1969), p. 148.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

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Dr. Norman J. Fedder is Associate Professor of Theatre at Kansas State University where he teaches playwriting and religious theatre. He is chairperson of the Religion and Theatre Program of the American Theatre Association and President of The Ecumenical Council for Drama and Other Arts. He is in the process of developing a National Jewish Theatre Council and is Director of The Jewish Heritage Theatre.

American Jewish Experience. On the other hand, there are occasional plays—such as the works of Jules Feiffer, Herb Gardner, Murray Schisgal, Neil Simon, Elmer Rice, Clifford Odets, Arthur Miller, Paddy Chayefsky, Elie Wiesel—which are of more than passing significance. Currently, for example, Herb Gardner's *The Goodbye People* in Los Angeles and Dick Goldberg's *Family Business* in New York are Jewish plays of consequence running strong. And there are perennial favorites, of course, like *The Diary of Anne Frank* by Goodrich and Hackett—being revived at present by Eli Wallach and Anne Jackson—and that all-time Jewish blockbuster *Fiddler on the Roof!* But these are all isolated examples, some only tangentially Jewish, others concerned with the *European* Jewish experience. The fact of the matter is that we have nothing comparable in American Theatre to the great Yiddish Theatre movement of the past which, as Nahma Sandrow's recent book on the subject has demonstrated, was both dynamically expressive of Eastern European Jewish life and at the same time a major force in Modern Theatre generally. (And this Yiddish Theatre thrived in *America!*) The fact of the matter is that no leading Jewish playwright in this country has taken American Jewish life as his major theme; has considered Jewish religious and cultural values as central to his feeling—crucial to his art.

Why should he anyway? Just because a playwright is Jewish in origin doesn't mean he will or should be Jewish in commitment. The Yiddish playwright could hardly escape the Jewish milieu; his American counterpart can easily avoid it. And the more assimilated the American Jew, the less Jewish will be his art. As Judaism becomes of minimal importance to his life, so it becomes to his dreams. And as he loses both a theatre to perform his ethnic writing and an audience to require it—as the American Jewish community through cultural assimilation does not support American Jewish Theatre as it did Yiddish Theatre—the compulsion to “write gentile” is even stronger.

Jewish playwrights came into prominence in this country as these descendents of immigrants of the late 19th and early 20th centuries became full-fledged Americans. They took part in the emergence of modern American Drama, in the 1920's and 1930's, as a worthy counterpart to the great dramatic literature being produced in Europe. Major playwrights were Elmer Rice and Lillian Hellman in tragedy, George S. Kaufman, Moss Hart, and S. N. Behrman in comedy. Elmer Rice featured Jewish characters in some of his plays—notably, the main character, Sam Kaplan, in Rice's most important work: *Street Scene*. But Sam, like Rice, has no use at all for Judaism. The playwright, in fact, was indifferent (if not hostile) to all religion; and was an ardent advocate of Jewish assimilation:

I heartily disliked Sunday school. . . . Even more distasteful than the class was the succeeding religious service in the temple: the unctuous dissertation of the rabbi; the singing of Hebrew hymns, no word of which I understood; and . . . the systematic collection of money. . . . When it was time to make arrangements for my confirmation, I flatly refused to go through with it. . . . I



could not bring myself to pledge allegiance to a creed that meant nothing to me. . . .<sup>4</sup>

As a thoroughgoing assimilationist, I believe intermarriage to be one of the best means of breaking down sectarian barriers and lessening racial and religious prejudice.<sup>5</sup>

Kaufman and Hart wrote zany comedies which became models for a whole school of American dramatic humor—the roots of which are, no doubt, the rich tradition of Jewish humor. However, no one play could be considered “Jewish” per se. These playwrights did not want to be labelled “ethnic”—anymore than did Hellman and Behrman who didn’t write on Jewish themes until much later in life; one play each—Hellman’s *My Mother, My Father, And Me*; Behrman’s *The Cold Wind And The Warm*—hardly their best work. (Although Behrman adapted Werfel’s *Jacobowsky and the Colonel* for a successful Broadway run; and it has been revived in musical form as *The Grand Tour*, currently playing in New York featuring Joel Grey.)

One might well have concluded as did Lionel Trilling in 1944, “as the Jewish community now exists, it can give no sustenance to the American artist or intellectual who is born a Jew.”<sup>6</sup> This seemed generally true of the quality of American Jewish writing—particularly writing for the theatre. The American melting pot had indeed assimilated the unique Jewish ingredient into a dramatic dish indistinguishable from the typical Yankee fare. Yet, ironically enough, in the fifties and sixties a “breakthrough” occurred in the area of American Jewish fiction. As critics Irving Malin and Irwin Stark have put it: “For the first time in history a large and impressively gifted group of serious American-Jewish writers has broken through the psychic barriers of the past to become an important, possibly a major reformatory influence in American life and letters.”<sup>7</sup> Jewishness became “in” in literary circles. Jewish novelists writing about Jews achieved acclaim as a major movement in American literature. Far from being an ethnic oddity, the American Jewish hero became universal man, and the Jewish experience as American as apple strudel. Books like Herman Wouk’s *Marjorie Morningstar*, Leon Uris’s *Exodus*, Philip Roth’s *Portnoy’s Complaint*, Bernard Malamud’s *The Assistant*, Chaim Potok’s *The Chosen*, and Saul Bellow’s *Herzog* hit the best seller lists. All this culminating in Bellow’s receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature. Jewish writers began to realize that to be ethnic is not necessarily to be parochial; that the greatest writing derives its universality from its effective expression of the particular; Faulkner wrote primarily of an obscure county in the state of Mississippi—yet through it embraced the entire world.

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<sup>4</sup> Elmer Rice, *Minority Report: An Autobiography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963), p. 51.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 416.

<sup>6</sup> Lionel Trilling, quoted in *Breakthrough: A Treasury of Contemporary American-Jewish Literature*, Edited by Irving Malin and Irwin Stark (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Irving Malin and Irwin Stark, *Breakthrough*, p. 1.

One might have expected a similar breakthrough in the American Theatre. But this was hardly so. For whatever reason, there are still only a handful of good American Jewish plays. When I put together a dramatic portrait of the American Jew a few years ago, I had to rely on fiction, not drama. Only four major American playwrights have made Jewishness of any consequence to their art: Clifford Odets, Paddy Chayefsky, Neil Simon, and Arthur Miller.

Clifford Odets has been called the "Poet of the Jewish Middle Class." Jewishness is certainly a major element in all his plays—particularly his best work—*Awake and Sing*. His characters speak a Yiddish-English which many critics consider to be the essence of his dramatic achievement. Alfred Kazin has recalled the initial impact of that dialogue:

In Odet's play (*Awake and Sing*) there was a lyric uplifting of blunt Jewish speech, boiling over and explosive, that did more to arouse the audience than the political catchwords that brought the curtain down. Everybody on that stage was furious, kicking, alive—the words, always real but never flat, brilliantly authentic like no other theatre speech on Broadway, aroused the audience to such delight that one could feel it bounding back and uniting itself with the mind of the writer.<sup>8</sup>

And Harold Cantor considers this speech a major influence on future American playwrights:

... it is questionable whether Miller would have achieved the speech rhythms of *Death of a Salesman*, or the early plays of Tennessee Williams would have been as free in their southern colloquialisms if there had not been the prior example of Odets' artistic dialogue.<sup>9</sup>

Odets, in fact, is seen by Cantor to be the progenitor of "the Jewish Renaissance of the Fifties and Sixties." "Many of the dilemmas and the foibles of the characters of Bellow, Malamud, and Roth are foreshadowed in Odets' plays."<sup>10</sup>

Odets comes closest to any American Jewish dramatist about whom it might be said that Jewishness characterizes the body of his work and provides it with its major strength. His first and finest full length play *Awake and Sing* is permeated with it; his last play *The Flowering Peach* is devoted to it—in a retelling of the Biblical Noah story as the saga of a modern Jewish family. But it is Jewishness, not Judaism. Odets writes out of his milieu, not his conviction. His ideological commitment throughout his best, early work was a vague, Marxist vision of social justice as epitomized in Ralph Berger's final speech in *Awake and Sing*—in tribute to his recently deceased communist grandfather:

My days won't be for nothing . . . I'm twenty two and kickin'! I'll get along.  
Did Jake die for us to fight about nickels? No! "Awake and sing," he said.

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<sup>8</sup> Alfred Kazin, *Starting Out in the Thirties* (Boston: Atlantic, Little, Brown, 1965), pp. 80-81.

<sup>9</sup> Harold Cantor, *Clifford Odets: Playwright-Poet* (Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, 1978), p. 147.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

Right here he stood and said it. The night he died, I saw it like a thunderbolt! I saw he was dead and I was born! I swear to God, I'm one week old! I want the whole city to hear it—fresh blood, arms. We got 'em. We're glad we're living.<sup>11</sup>

The text is from Isaiah, but the vision is from Marx. The texture is Jewish—but the substance is socialist. Odets later abandoned his political convictions, and indeed his career as a serious dramatist, for the richer rewards of writing for Hollywood. He fitfully returned to the stage and to Jewishness, but he remained as confused about that as about everything else in his ambivalent dramatic career.

Paddy Chayefsky, speaking at a Jewish Cultural Arts Conference in 1976, declared that he always asks of anything he creates: "Is the net result going to help or hurt the Jews?"<sup>12</sup> Chayefsky has "helped" the Jews by writing four plays which are centrally concerned with the Jewish experience. The early teleplays "Holiday Song" and "The Reluctant Citizen" focus on Jewish-American responses to victims of the Holocaust—the former from the viewpoint of a cantor whose faith is challenged by contact with a concentration camp survivor—the latter through the adjustment to American life of a refugee from Nazi persecution. *The Tenth Man* is a stage play taking its dramatic metaphor from the most important drama of the Yiddish Theatre: *The Dybbuk* by S. Anski. A dybbuk is a spirit which returns from the dead to take possession and speak through a living being in response to some wrong inflicted upon it by that being. Both in Anski's and Chayefsky's plays, a young woman is so possessed—in Anski's literally, in Chayefsky's psychologically. The American's heroine is a schizophrenic who believes herself to be "the whore of Kiev." *The Tenth Man*, taking place in a store front synagogue in Long Island, dramatizes the attempt of a group of old men to exorcize the so-called dybbuk. But the real exorcism involves the bringing to life and love of a young man who is corraled into the synagogue as the required tenth man for prayer. He is typical of that contemporary Jew who has neither faith in God nor man, but manages to maintain an uneasy existence through psychoanalysis and alcohol. Probably the most charming aspect of the play is the depiction of the ensemble of old, immigrant Jews whose Judaism is made palpable as they provide a wholesome contrast to the apostasy of the pathetic exemplar of Freudian "enlightenment." *The Tenth Man* ran for a year and a half on Broadway and was succeeded by Chayefsky's next attempt at Jewish Theatre—his dramatization of the *Book of Gideon*. Gideon portrays the archetypal Jewish dialogue between God and man, where man both irreverently and comically challenges his Maker concerning the plight of mankind. In this instance, Gideon rebels against being merely God's servant. Through the Diety's intervention, this clownish framer defeats the Midianite army of thousands with three

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<sup>11</sup> Clifford Odets, *Awake and Sing, Six Plays of Clifford Odets* (New York: The Modern Library, 1933) pp. 100-101.

<sup>12</sup> Paddy Chayefsky, quoted in "Variety of Views Expressed at JWB's Cultural Arts Conference," *The JWB Circle*, p. 4.

hundred men. But Gideon wants to take all the credit for the victory. He refuses to kill some traitors at God's command: "I cannot do it. Let them live. . . .For surely man must have more meaning than this." He prefers belief in Man rather than belief in God in order to give his life that kind of meaning. The play ends with God's reluctant acceptance of Gideon's (Man's) wilfulness.

One might quarrel, as many critics have, with Chayefsky's simplistic theology—the eleventh hour conversion to the Creed of Love in *The Tenth Man*—the sophomoric dialectic of Faith vs. Reason in *Gideon*. But the playwright is at his best in his genre portraits of American Jewish life. In the words of critic Kenneth Tynan: ". . . Mr. Chayefsky is a wonderfully creative listener. The best of his Jewish dialogue is as meaty as any I have heard since the heyday of Clifford Odets."<sup>13</sup> Yet—in keeping with Odets' example—Chayefsky departed from Jewish subject matter in the plays following *Gideon*; and finally deserted the stage altogether for a highly successful career in screenwriting.

Neil Simon, according to William Goldman (in *The Season*), "writes both Jewish and Gentile." "*The Odd Couple*," says Simon, "is Jewish in feel, *Barefoot in the Park* non-Jewish. I'm aware when I'm doing it. It's a matter of attitude. The Jewish is martyrdom and self-pity and 'everything terrible happens to me.' No, it's more than just attitude; the phraseology is different, too."<sup>14</sup> Simon's first play—*Come Blow Your Horn*—was explicitly Jewish; and the "attitude and phraseology" are unmistakable in *The Last of the Red Hot Lovers*, *The Prisoner of Second Avenue*, *The Sunshine Boys*, and *God's Favorite*. This last—a comic version of the *Book of Job*—continues the traditional Jewish encounter with God we have observed in *Gideon*—as outrageously and hilariously. Simon has actually written few "gentile plays." The bulk of his work is Jewish in flavor. But that's all it is—flavor. Simon digs no deeper into American Jewish experience than he does into any other area of American life. He is our greatest comic playwright because he often approaches the deepest centers of the human comedy, and he has fashioned some memorable characters—like the telling portraits of two old Jewish comedians in *The Sunshine Boys*. But almost in fear of profundity, he retreats to the wisecrack at the moment of truth—to mere "entertainment." And his Jewishness, however strongly it permeates his writing, is only incidental to his essential vocation as an entertainer.

Finally, there is Arthur Miller. Miller is often accused by critics, such as Leslie Fiedler, of creating "crypto-Jewish characters; characters who are in habit, speech, and condition of life typically Jewish-American, but who are presented as something else—general American say, as in *Death of a Salesman*." Fiedler attacks this as "a loss of artistic faith, a failure to remember that the inhabitants of Dante's Hell or Joyce's Dublin

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<sup>13</sup> Kenneth Tynan, "Review of *The Tenth Man*," *The New Yorker*, Vol. XXXV (November 14, 1959), p.21.

<sup>14</sup> Neil Simon, quoted in William Goldman, *The Season*, p. 148.

are more universal as they are more Florentine or Irish.”<sup>15</sup> The so-called “Jewishness” of *Děath of a Salesman* has concerned a number of critics—most recently in an article by Joel Shatzky called “Arthur Miller’s ‘Jewish Salesman.’ ” Shatzky—on second-hand knowledge that “Miller knew and spoke fluent Yiddish”—finds any number of Yiddishisms in the dialogue and implies that the play works better in Yiddish translation!<sup>16</sup>

Arthur Miller responds to such critics by insisting that he comes from

... people who rarely, if ever, spoke Yiddish. I simply wasn’t brought up the way Fiedler evidently thinks I should have been. I understand what this kind of critic is saying; that a Jewish writer cannot obtain any universality unless he writes about Jewish people as such. But I write about what reflects *my* experience. Where the theme seems to require a Jew to act somehow in terms of his Jewishness, he does so. Where it seems to me irrelevant what the religious or cultural background of a character may be, it is treated as such. I see nothing in *Salesman*, *All My Sons*, *After The Fall*, or *The Crucible* which is of that nature. *Incident At Vichy* deals directly with the anti-semitic problem so there are Jewish characters. Similarly, Gregory Solomon in *The Price* has to be Jewish, for one thing because the theme of survival, of a kind of acceptance of life, seemed to me to point directly to the Jewish experience through centuries of oppression. For me it is the theme that rules these choices.<sup>17</sup>

Can one justly fault Miller for writing as he chooses? He has never denied his Jewishness, and he believes it informs all his work—in his

... refusal to adopt a nihilistic attitude, I realize that a non-Jewish writer could have the same aversion, and obviously some do, but there would be possibly different reasons for it. My feeling is that when you sell nihilism, so to speak, you are creating the grounds for nihilistic destruction, and the first one to get is the Jew. ... You see the Jew is always the one, or most of the time, who stands at the crack of the civilization, the shearing point. The roots of my aversion may well be Jewish, but my concern is for the country as a whole.<sup>18</sup>

But Miller is not a Jewish playwright in the final analysis. The roots are not the tree. Yet he has discerned what I consider the major theme of Judaism: the struggle to attain for ourselves and all mankind—a world devoid of “nihilistic destruction”—and to see this struggle in terms of the Jew’s historical and contemporary experience—in terms of the Jewish heritage. A meaningful American Jewish Theatre—like analogous movements in other ethnic and religious communities, such as the Black, the Chicano, the Native American, and Christian—would express this heritage in theatrical form. Indeed I believe that, given the nature of theatre art, Jewish playwriting cannot flourish without theatre companies to encourage it. Such companies have recently emerged in New York City,

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<sup>15</sup> Leslie Fiedler, quoted in Robert A. Martin, “The Creative Experiences of Arthur Miller: An Interview,” *Educational Theatre Journal*, Vol. XXI (October, 1969).

<sup>16</sup> Joel Shatzky, “Arthur Miller’s ‘Jewish’ Salesman,” *Studies in American Jewish Literature*, Vol. II (Winter, 1976), pp. 1-9.

<sup>17</sup> Arthur Miller, quoted in Robert A. Martin, “The Creative Experience of Arthur Miller,” p. 315.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 316-317.

Los Angeles, Washington— and, of all places, Kansas! And more are in the making. Through them let us hope that major playwrights will develop with a Jewish commitment as strong as their dramatic skill; through fidelity to their own rich heritage—enriching, as from the first, all mankind.

# Musical Mortar

Mary Lu Walker

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I was taught "religion" over forty years ago in a small Catholic school in Atlanta, Georgia, and the Baltimore Catechism shaped my perception of what God was and what He expected of me. The study of religion was a serious business and to describe it as "joyless" would be an understatement. The nuns told me that the God who was defined in page after page of questions and answers was all-loving and kind, but equal time was given to vivid accounts of the pains of hellfire that awaited the sinner. Singing was certainly not an essential part of religious education although we learned the old Catholic hymns at Sunday Mass and occasionally were taught (not too successfully ) to sing Gregorian chant. Whether sung in Latin or in English, the words to the songs were often meaningless to me for they had little to do with the world I knew or even the everyday language that I spoke. The ancient Latin hymns had a power and majesty which touched me emotionally but which brought me no closer to an understanding of God. He was "up there" somewhere, dressed in golden robes and surrounded by angels and saints. Jesus suffered and died for my sins (*i.e.* marshmallow stealing and sassy talk), and I was part of Holy Mother the Church.

I heard other music when I was a child which colored my feelings about God. One of my earliest memories is of a young black nursemaid who sang:

Up on the mountain, my Lord spoke  
Out of His mouth came fire and smoke.

Now, there was an image! What kind of God was this? Not sitting on a throne, but standing on a mountain, roaring like one of the dragons in the fairytales I loved. Later on when I joined the Girl Scouts I learned "Jesus Loves Me" and another mental image of God was added. This Jesus was pink and blue and haloed like the pictures on holy cards, and had

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Mary Lu Walker is a singer and composer of children's music who has three records and books: *Songs For Young Children* and *Dandelions*, Paulist Press, 1865 Broadway, N.Y., N.Y., 1973, 1975, and *Peaceable Kingdom*, OSV Music, 200 Noll Plaza, Huntington, Indiana, 46750, 1978. She has conducted workshops and performed throughout the United States and Canada and will be touring Australia in 1979 under the auspices of the Uniting Churches of Australia as part of their celebration of the United Nations' "International Year of the Child," K and R Music will release her *Middle-Age Middle-Class Mama* songs in the spring of 1979.

something to do with the Bible which I assumed was the Protestant Baltimore Catechism. I learned other hymns from the cowboy movies in the thirties which often had scenes of frontier congregations singing "Bringing In The Sheaves" or "Shall We Gather At The River" to the accompaniment of a little pump organ. The image of God that I drew from these songs was of a sober, responsible, conservative pillar of society. I heard gospel music and white spirituals on the radio, and in these songs God dealt directly with the miseries and pain of His people. The heritage of the Jewish and Negro traditions was reflected in the popular music of the day, but I was not exposed to songs sung in synagogues or churches where black people worshipped. The purely religious music which I heard did nothing to deepen my knowledge or love of God.

Ten years ago when I went back into the classroom as a volunteer in the CCD program at St. Patrick's School in Corning, New York, I was unaware of the revolutionary changes that had taken place in catechetical methods since I was a child. My energies and mind had been occupied for fifteen years with the job of rearing eight children; the changes in the Church that had begun with Vatican II had made no direct impact upon my life. I lived in a small, upstate New York town which, in many ways, is as isolated as an island. We have one newspaper, two radio stations, and receive television by cable. I rarely left Corning and a trip to Elmira, twenty miles away, was an exciting event; my world was small. When my youngest child was five, I suddenly became aware of the folk music revival that had already bloomed and begun to wither in the outside world, and like Mr. Toad in the "Wing in the Willows" who "had to have a motorcycle," I had to have a guitar. I found a stringless, hand-painted model at Happy Howard's Second Hand Shoppe which he was glad to give me for just \$2 and a violin. For two years I played every three chord song I'd ever heard (in the key of G) and at this stage in my musical development a friend asked me to help her with a class of first graders whom she taught as a volunteer in a religious education program on Saturday mornings.

I went into the classroom for the first time on that Saturday ten years ago with my body in the 1970's but with my mind filled with all the old notions about appropriate "religious" songs. The hymns I'd learned as a child were too hard for me to play and didn't lend themselves to the only strum I'd been able to master. I couldn't read music and so even if some other more appropriate music had been available, I wouldn't have been able to use it. "Jesus Loves Me" was the song I chose because I knew it was meant for children and because it had three chords which I could figure out and because I could play it in G. I would never have had the courage to play and sing before a group of adults, but I liked children and was fairly certain that I could probably do better on the guitar than any of the six year olds in the room. We sang "Jesus Loves Me" for quite a while and sometimes I remembered that as a child I had thought the words said: "Jesus loves me, this eye'll know . . .," and I wondered what the song was really meaning to these children. I thought I should be doing "holy" songs with them, but I



was hard put to find any that I could master because of my limited musical ability. I tried a few spirituals and they were fun to do, but, again, it seemed to me that the words probably didn't have too much significance for the children. I began to read the texts that the teachers were using and I found that a real effort was being made to speak to children on their own level. The effort wasn't always successful; I still saw references in third grade texts to a "Supreme Being," and I knew from experience with my own children that God had a way of becoming a "creamed bean," but the Baltimore Catechism had definitely become a memory. Meanwhile, my skills as a song leader and guitarist for the younger set were growing, and I had begun taking guitar lessons in an adult education class at the local high school and was learning to read music.

I was lucky at this time to meet the Minister of Education at one of the local Methodist churches. Richard Cookson was a man who had traveled widely and had an extensive library of books and records which he was happy to share with me. For the first time I heard the "new" music which people like Ray Repp and Joe Wise were writing and I loved it. The words to these liturgical folk hymns meant something to me and the music was easy to play and to sing. I began to use them with the children (by this time I was working with the older grades as well as with the younger ones) and I'm afraid there's a whole generation of young adults who sing "Shout From The Highest Mountain" just a little bit wrong because I didn't always get the tune exactly right.

I still kept hunting with no success for songs that were meant specifically for children—songs which would augment the texts being used.

One of the most striking differences I found between 1934 B.C. (Baltimore Catechism) and the new methods being used was in the area that we used to call "contrition." We memorized the act of Contrition which went in part: ". . . I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee and I detest my sins because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell . . . ." The prayer went on: "Most of all I am sorry because my sins offend Thee who art all good and deserving of all my love. . . .," but my contrition as a child was based less on sorrow than on the fear of damnation. The emphasis in the new texts was on being genuinely sorry for having hurt God, and children were helped to understand the concept through examples which related to their own experiences. It seemed to me that there should be a song about such an important teaching. No one had told me that you just can't write songs if you can't read music; no one had told me that you must be a trained musician to write songs; no one had told me for that matter, that middle-age women look silly with guitars (well, my kids had said something to that effect, but I didn't pay any attention to *them*) so one day I wrote a song:

## I AM SORRY

What does being sorry mean  
When I say it to you?  
I open my mind  
I open my heart  
To tell you I love you.

Selfish words and selfish thoughts  
I didn't care about you.  
Please give me a chance  
To be your friend  
And say that I love you.<sup>1</sup>

That song takes around thirty seconds to sing and around two minutes to learn. It's short because I couldn't think of anything else that needed to be said. I worried a little about some of the words—"open my heart . . . open my mind" but felt that with a little explanation the image of an operating room could be dispelled. I was delighted when the children sang my song and amazed at the way the teacher was able to use it to help them understand true contrition. I hadn't set out to preach nor to teach but found the task of song writing a challenge from which I derived pleasure. It was good to create something that pleased others and that wasn't eaten up or spilled on twenty minutes later.

I still felt that only overtly religious songs could be applicable to CCD classes—those that mentioned God or Jesus—and the next songs I wrote reflected that opinion. I was never particularly comfortable writing this type song since I was and still am unsure of my own beliefs but I knew the message well and enjoyed expressing it in simple songs. Although I knew little or nothing about theology, nearly fifty years of living had taught me something about human relationships and the importance of people caring for and loving one another. I began to write songs which expressed these ideas although I did not use them with the CCD children. I wrote a song about a butterfly for a friend who loves them and I had no deep purpose in mind other than to please my friend and to give him a gift. This friend had a knack for helping others to realize their potential and the song reflects this:

## THE BUTTERFLY SONG

Once there was a caterpillar living in a shell  
Happy to be in a place where everything went well  
No one to bother him, no other worms to see  
Locked up in his dark cocoon,  
He thought that he was free.

Hey, little worm, don't you see?  
Come out of your shell  
And fly with me  
Only butterflies are free.

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<sup>1</sup>From *Songs for Young Children*, (Paulist Press, 1973).

Something took that caterpillar as he slept one day  
Woke him up and gave him wings and helped him fly away  
People too can live in shells, afraid of being free  
Whatever changed that fearful worm  
Can change both you and me.<sup>1</sup>

My friend was pleased with my gift, but beyond that, he informed me that I had written something profound and religious. That was news to me, and some years passed before I used the song at St. Patrick's. Meanwhile, I discovered that I was not the only one looking for children's songs more appropriate to the new methods of teaching. A young editor at Paulist Press liked my songs and she encouraged me to begin to write (I hesitated to use the word "compose") in earnest. I remember questioning the value of what I was saying in my songs, and she would explain patiently how songs about birds and trees and friendship were, indeed, ways in which to express the gospel message. Often the task of telling me what my songs were saying fell to others and I began to hear how teachers were using them and was continually amazed.

Eventually my mind caught up with my heart and I began to understand that if my songs could serve as vehicles by which more weighty subjects could be introduced to children, then they could be useful in the teaching of religion and had a legitimate place in the classroom. I saw that songs could be like mortar or cement to reinforce the lesson of the day. I could sing of the beauty and wonder of the world and its people and let the *real* teacher relate these gifts to the Giver. If the songs were fun and caused the children to laugh or shout and sing at the tops of their voices, then maybe some of the exuberance would attach itself to their feelings about God and the Church.

I am happy that some people can interpret my songs in ways that reinforce their faith, and I am happy that teachers can use my songs to explain complicated ideas to children, but most of all, I am happy and grateful that children like to sing them. "The Butterfly" doesn't just fly around on Saturdays and Sundays but delivers its message wherever children gather to sing. It has been used as part of an Easter celebration and it has been used at a kindergarten graduation in a public school. I have sung it for the Sisterhood of the B'nai Israel Synagogue and at folk festivals, for senior citizens and for residents of halfway houses. I am glad that "The Butterfly" and I are free to do these things.

I never knew I could write a song until I tried. I probably would never have tried if I hadn't been drafted to help a friend who was working as a volunteer in a CCD program. Although I lacked her deep faith and her ability to communicate this faith to her students, I had a skill that was of some value to her—a little skill, to be sure, but one that grew as I was able to use it on a consistent basis. The encouragement of the church community

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<sup>1</sup>Mary Lu Walker, *Songs For Young Children* Copyright 1973, The Missionary Society of St. Paul the Apostle in the State of New York.

that needed my brought me out of my shell. The fledgling story-teller, or puppeteer, (or three - chord guitar player) who begins to work with children is fortunate for he will find a sympathetic audience. Adults can be harsh critics and can wither budding talents with harsh words; children tend to overlook the stumbling of the amateur and, in accepting the gift of the artist's talent, the child gives back encouragement and joy.

They say the Lord loves a cheerful giver and I hope that's true. Although I have given countless hours to the Church, I've never had any problems being cheerful about it —maybe because I never considered that I was giving, except to myself. I have had a wonderful time with my songs, and I don't recall a time when I haven't enjoyed playing, singing, and writing them. I thank God for giving me the ability to make music and I'm glad that I've been able to use that gift in some way that might be pleasing to Him/Her.

# The Renewed Spirit of Drama in the Church—the Christian Perspective

Wilma Douglas Ringstrom

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Why are we concerned with drama in the church—somewhere, anywhere in the life of the church—or exploring the role of drama in the service of worship? Why not leave the business of theatre to the professional companies, to TV, to the university theatre departments, to the community theatre organizations mushrooming all over the country? The 'why' of all of the arts in the life of the church is the beginning point, not 'what' are we going to produce or 'how' are we going to go about developing the drama program. The congregation must know why.

## Why Drama in the Church?

There is a renewed spirit and interest in art forms—drama, music, literature, visual arts—have a depth of meaning and feeling for the discerning mind. Good drama causes the mind to soar to unexplored vistas of insight, imagination and intellect. Drama is not make-believe. It is the imitation of an action. Great drama explores and presents truth.

In the Introduction to *Religious Drama 3*, Marvin Halverson writes:

One of the significant developments in recent years has been the return of religion to the theater and the return of drama to the churches. While some have been astonished by the emergence of obviously religious themes in commercial theater and the sponsorship of good drama by the churches, the rapprochement is both understandable and perhaps inevitable. For drama is not only rooted in the mimetic impulses of man but derives fundamentally from man's religious apprehension of life as well. This is true whether it be a tragedy of the Greeks or of Shakespeare. It is equally true of that comedy which enables man to see himself in perspective, thus becoming a prelude to faith.<sup>1</sup>

One of the most important books in the field of religious drama is *Religious*

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<sup>1</sup> Marvin Halverson, Editor, *Religious Drama 3*, (Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, Reprinted, 1972, by Permission of World Publishing) p. 5.

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Wilma Douglas Ringstrom is a drama consultant—actress, director, writer—a leader of national workshops on drama in the church and community. She is founder of Ecumenical Council for Drama & Other Arts, Inc. and chairperson of the Department of Fine Arts of the Missouri Council of Churches.

*Drama Ends And Means* by Harold Ehrensperger reprinted in 1975 for a new generation of students.

Drama can succeed in uniting the whole person with the wholeness of another human being, so that the result of the encounter may be growth of many kinds. The subject matter of the play and the content of the dramatic experience provide the bridge between the performer and the audience or between one individual and another. By way of this bridge communication that is profound and relatively total takes place, fulfilling the original meaning of the word communication—a sharing of suffering, happiness, wealth, property, and experience to the point of unity. When sufficient life is made common through experiencing drama, communication is restored to its original meaning—communion.<sup>2</sup>

In *Contemporary Theatre and the Christian Faith*, Kay M. Baxter states:

No theatre is new. But today's theatre is concerned, more deeply than for many generations, with exploring the human condition in all its aspects. Inevitably it touches at many points upon the concerns of thoughtful Christians. In both theatre and church there is a ferment of dissatisfaction and a thrust of hope.<sup>3</sup>

John Van Zanten is concerned with modern drama as prelude to the gospel in *Caught In The Act*.

The playwrights, being sensitive emotionally and intellectually to what is happening, help us in their plays to understand what it means to be alive today—to face the problems of freedom and responsibility, guilt and forgiveness, death and disillusion, time and eternity, violence and rebellion, the abstract and the concrete, body and spirit, faith and grace. The writers do not have “messages” for us; they concentrate on the situation, on the human questions which are current and yet constant in human history. We do not find the Christian gospel in their plays, but we do find a prelude to the gospel.<sup>4</sup>

Scholars in the field of religion and the arts seem to be in agreement; there is a close bond which exists between religion and drama, and dramatists of all ages have expressed in the dramatic form certain beliefs concerning human destiny. There is a sense of commitment and conviction and inspiration for persons who would relate their faith to all dramas which treat of man and his destiny.

## The Importance of Evaluation

There is an all encompassing agreement about the bond between religion and drama; however, when we consider a list of plays, or a specific drama we believe vital to the church program, or the right choice to be incorporated in the service of worship, at this point there is a surprising conflict of views on the subject. The plays will be used by church groups

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<sup>2</sup> Harold Ehrensperger, *Religious Drama Ends And Means*, (New York: Abingdon Press, Revised reprint, 1975; original publication, 1962.) p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Kay M. Baxter, *Contemporary Theatre and the Christian Faith*, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1965) p. 5 (Published in England by the SCM Press under the title of *Speak What We Feel*, 1964.)

<sup>4</sup> John Van Zanten, *Caught In The Act*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1972) p. 13.

under varying circumstances in different denominations; there is the range of theological thought in terms of the selection of the play, together with the difference in training in the skills required. In the book *Christianity and the Arts*, Donald Whittle discusses the fact that one playwright will see no essential difference between religious drama and other sorts of drama, while another will argue that the Christian dramatist's aim is conversion, that there are few good Christian plays because they become a weapon of conversion—in a sense something hostile to a work of art. (I have read far too many of those moralizing plays. However, while it seems inevitable that a Christian Writer's interpretation of life will reflect his religious faith, I do not believe it necessarily follows that the play will preach at us.) I believe that a play's 'religious' quality does not depend on the playwright's religious convictions, nor can we look to a Biblical setting or explicitly religious theme or an altruistic plot.

What does speak to the play's 'religious' quality is its impact upon the audience. Does the play add to one's vision of life? How does it affect us? How does the work depict freedom—sin—guilt—joy? Does the play present explicitly or implicitly a notion of salvation? What does the play say about the person's nature and destiny. And for all of those who are going to be involved for a concentrated period of time in the production of a play—each person involved should like the play; it must be within the group's capabilities, both from the standpoint of performance and the technical problems of the play.

The play you are considering will be for the most part in one of the following three categories—there will be strong spiritual/religious values in the script; or the play reflects the contemporary issue-oriented, thematic approach; it is a play that speaks to us in a significant way about basic questions we face in our society today. The third category has to do with aesthetic values—the poetic speech, imagery to lend beauty to your program. All three are valid. But do know why you choose a particular drama.

Alfred R. Edyvean, in his book *This Dramatic World*, discusses the difference between religious drama and Christian drama. He writes that religious drama should say something about man's predicament, in a way that we can appreciate his dilemma; that religious drama should recognize a power beyond man, a power that operates in his life whether he chooses to recognize it or not. Religious drama shows man at the limits of his own power, facing the existential question: What is man? Is man no more than this?

Dr. Edyvean states that the primary difference between the Christian playwright and others is that he regards the relationship between God and man as fundamental. Christian drama sees man in relationship to other men, in self-examination or in relationship to God; the Christian playwright deals with theological concepts: forgiveness, repentance, atonement, judgment, fellowship, confession, faith. The hope of redemption is always present; and in Christian drama we often find a character

who might be seen as a Christ figure, as well as such symbols as the cross.

## Dramatic Methods

Newcomers to drama in the church may well begin with a study group to read aloud and discuss contemporary drama—ideas, feelings, attitudes and convictions.

Drama has the power to involve us. When we see enacted a situation whose significance we feel and with whose circumstances we can identify, we find ourselves involved in that situation to a remarkable degree. All of us have known the power of this kind of involvement<sup>5</sup>

Go back in time and read the medieval miracle and mystery plays, religious plays, Christian plays, drama playing on the college campus and in professional theatres. Go to the theatre. You will know what plays speak to your congregation—there is a place somewhere in the church for any good play.

The most sensitive area in considering the role of drama in the church is that of chancel drama, drama in worship. However, the use of drama is not something new or novel to the Christian church. During the medieval period Christians began dramatizing Biblical events as part of the worship service. The Church needs to express its gospel dramatically. Dramatic worship requires experience; the director needs an understanding of worship, time for preparation. Drama performed in the chancel should invite all worshipers to participate. The voice and speaking chorus enhanced by rhythmic movement is effective in worship—dramatization of scripture has been expressed in a variety of ways. Ecumenical Council for Drama & Other Arts sponsored a workshop at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs in the summer of 1977. During the workshop, services using the arts were held in the Chapel for the Protestant, Catholic and Jewish communities. In all three services, Psalm 96, the King James Version, was enacted by a group of workshop participants. There were solo voices and chorus, light and heavy voices, two groups of people moving rhythmically, coming together in the chancel of the church, in exhortation to praise God. Liturgical dance, poetry, and an offering of soft sculpture were a part of the services.

Dramatic services of worship frequently include excerpts from contemporary drama in the place of the sermon. Sermon ideas have been expressed through improvisational acting. This technique is in no way theatre games turned loose on the congregation. At no time should the careless or inadequately prepared drama work be permitted in the worship service. Sermon topics keep changing, but improvisation in worship has unchanging rules to follow. The minister is planning a series of sermons based on today's family. He seeks help from the drama group. "How would

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<sup>5</sup> Robert E. Wunderlich, *Worship and the Arts*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), p. 119.



you enact that feeling of aloneness—alienation of youth?” The drama group act out improvisationally all the ideas that come to them, and then the discussion and the paring begin. All that is unnecessary or any part that tends to drift away from the subject is eliminated. They rehearse again until they have tightened their improvisation, to bring it into focus, and real things are happening to real people in their enactment. They time their improvisation. The minister knows that the drama group will take five minutes next Sunday morning. Before he begins the sermon, the actors come into the chancel area, enact their mini-drama on youth, and the minister continues his sermon where the actors left off. For next Sunday, the drama group will be working on the subject of divorce. That enactment could take seven or eight minutes. But it is all right because the minister knows his actors will work at it until their improvisational acting will shake up the congregation like ‘spiritual alarm clocks for our day’—(Bernard Scott’s description). It takes listening, valuing, expressing and working to come up with improvisations that are persuasive and command respect. I have seen a number of variations and use of this technique to incorporate drama into worship or to breathe life and imagination into a meeting. It is challenging and fun.

If you are going to incorporate a one-act play into the worship service, it is usually better to stay with drama of ideas that can be interpreted without too many props. For example, Christopher Fry’s *A Sleep of Prisoners* is an excellent, thought-provoking religious play. But it does not belong in the sanctuary because the set is a bombed-out church turned into an army barracks with army cots and bales of hay. The play is worth the doing, but move it into the fellowship hall or any other place in the church except the chancel area.

Another method of dramatic communication is reader’s theatre, which involves two or more readers who are reading aloud from scripts—there is form and dramatic effects in their performance. One successful reader’s theatre group I know is comprised of three men and two women—one couple is young, college age; the second couple of indeterminate ages and the third man somewhere in between. This particular group can handle realistically just about any script that comes their way and have created a number of dramatic programs using drama, poetry, literature, the Bible, and newspaper and magazine accounts.

Youth like to perform in walking rehearsals, a rehearsed reading of the play (usually a one-act). With scripts in hand, they move about the stage, enter and exit, and bring their own vitality to the performance. In these busy times, the informal methods are gaining importance, but for the dedicated dramatist, director and actor, the epitome of theatre is the fully produced play, a good play imagined in action by the director and acted with sensitivity and intelligence by the cast.

Drama has served in workcamp situations, in hospitals, in training schools, and is emerging as an adjunct to the professional counselor and psychologist. In September, 1978, William Brower of Princeton

Theological Seminary and I were invited to the "Conjoint Training Model—Helping Skills Workshop" conducted by the US Army Chaplain Board for Family Life Counseling Teams to present our program entitled *Marriage—Holy or Unholy Alliance* a study of marriage through the eyes of playwrights, poets, and preachers. After the performance, in an informal conversation, we discussed with the chaplains our choices of material, in particular the contemporary drama—plays like *Our Town* to portray youth not ready for marriage; *Death of a Salesman*, marriage in trouble when one of the partners is failing; *Shadow Box*, dealing with death, *Seascape*, in a lighthearted manner, treating the subject of retirement; *Double Solitaire*, a play about loss of faith and infidelity, and other plays. It was a valuable and interesting experience for Bill and for me. We welcomed the opportunity.

Drama is moving into new forms and nonforms, changing, growing—but the commitment and fascination of drama in the church is very old and enduring. Robert Edmond Jones says to actors in *The Dramatic Imagination*, "Keep in your souls some images of magnificence." He describes great acting as "the miracle of incarnation." The place of the theatre in the life of the spirit comes forth clearly in *The Dramatic Imagination*.

## Now and the Future—Other Thoughts

John Killinger, in *Experimental Preaching*, reminds us of the fleeting nature of the arts, the risks we must take . . .

Real art involves exploration and discovery. It may not even involve permanency, but may be as fleeting and perishable as a moment of recognition. The true artist, then, never worships at the shrine of what he has done. He is always in flight, always on the way, risking himself again and again for the disclosures by which he sustains his spirit.<sup>6</sup>

In *The Courage To Create*, Rollo May advises us to be aware of limitations:

Creativity arises out of the tension between spontaneity and limitations, the latter (like the river bands) forcing the spontaneity into the various forms which are essential to the work of art or poem.<sup>7</sup>

Gerardus Van Der Leeuw, in *Sacred And Profane Beauty: The Holy In Art*, brings to us strong visual images.

Climb up upon this height and you will see how the paths of beauty and of holiness approach each other, growing distant, until finally in the far distance, they can no longer be held apart.<sup>8</sup>

A look to the future for theater everywhere, (and for drama in the church in particular) as expressed by Jacques Burdick in *Theater*.

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<sup>6</sup> John Killinger, Editor, *Experimental Preaching*, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1973) p. 18.

<sup>7</sup> Rollo May, *The Courage To Create*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1975) p. 119.

<sup>8</sup> Gerardus Van Der Leeuw, *Sacred And Profane Beauty: The Holy in Art*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart And Winston, 1963), p. 337.

Judging from appearances alone, one might conclude that with the passing of sumptuous Renaissance theater and the elaborate conventions of that theater's protocol, something has indeed died—but forms, as Plato reminded us long ago, are only forms; they are not the essence.

The essence of theater is the imitation of life, whatever the circumstances of life at any given moment happen to be. And one thing is certain: as long as man survives, theater and the imitative act, the essential function of all language, will continue—choosing, as circumstances dictate, that form which most closely suits its immediate purpose.<sup>9</sup>

We look to the renewed spirit of the future and whatever form that drama in the church will take tomorrow and tomorrow.

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<sup>9</sup> Jacques Burdick, *Theater*, (New York: Newsweek Books, 1973), p. 151.

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## Book Reviews

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### Preparing The Way of The Lord

Miriam Therese Winter

Abingdon, Nashville, TN; 1978

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The continuing changes brought about by the liturgical movements of the past few years and the effects on most worshippers leave many “still struggling to cope with consequences few really understand.” Much effort “has gone into updating the people and dispelling alienation.” This book is written to “offer one more assist to that psychological transition . . . a brief but serious glance at contemporary corporate prayer.”

Winter writes “for the people of God in parishes and congregations . . . laity and leaders together . . . Protestants and Catholics.” She regards her book as a “mini-course for congregations . . . a teaching aid to enable the average parish or congregation to take responsibility for prayer, both the design of it and the doing, with some degree of confidence.”

With that in mind, Part One of the book presents necessary background information. The author wants to “lessen the gap still separating academic insight from its more practical application.” She begins with a very insightful and provocative chapter about “Prayer and the Praying Community,” what is termed “a reflection . . . along the lines of a rationale [regarding] the quality of worship.” Next comes “A loving look at history [that] brings a traditional dimension to the trends of modern times”; it is a wonderfully succinct look in smoothly flowing prose that encompasses the biblical roots and sweeps on up through the growth of the Church into our own times. This is followed by a valuable discussion of symbols and ritual. “All the Christian churches today suffer an impoverishment of symbols, hung suspended between the loss of a tradition and new forms still to come.” There is movement here that ignites fresh hope for the recovery and improvement of such expressions of faith, for good celebrations that can produce an increase of faith. And that demands “meaningful ritual . . . simply acting out . . . our commitment to symbols and myths.” A final chapter in Part One looks at the necessity for achieving the required transition between being hearers and doers of the Word, the Christian “appointment to be the continuity of a ministry well begun,” making real the promises of the good news.

Part Two is an attempt to present “a practical application of some of the many principles presented in the preceding rationale.” Here are presented outlines of how to go about the whole process, “a handbook of procedures” for developing “active leadership in the shaping of corporate prayer.” It is “meant . . . to be studied, digested, and applied.” There are detailed guidelines for leadership preparation; preparation of an overall approach to corporate worship, including preparation of the congregation; and some well-chosen words about “Social Outreach” as the logical “consequence of a deeply rooted liturgical spirit . . . the visible intergration of behavior and belief.

This book produces its own growing enthusiasm in response to its author’s “rationale” and suggested guidelines for applying it at the congregational level. She writes so well and with such obvious expertise—and is so level-headed and reasonable about things—that a reader gets caught up in the whole effort. That has been this reader’s experience, and I’m sure it will be your experience when you read the book. Chaplains especially need a helpful work like this,

not only for its assistance in achieving a healthy perspective but also for its aid in developing a solid corporate worship experience.

Medical Mission Sister Miriam Therese Winter is a doctoral candidate in liturgical studies at Princeton Theological Seminary. She is widely known for her many albums of recorded original Scripture songs, including her first, "Joy is Like the Rain." She has lived and served in many parts of the world, including Africa and Israel.

—WILLIAM E. PAUL, JR.

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## Anti-Semitism in The New Testament?

Samuel Sandmel

Fortress Press, Philadelphia, PA; 1978

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This study came about because of the author's conviction that "... focused study of the straightforward question that comprised the title has become increasingly imperative." He is a rabbi who is also a longtime student of early Christianity, and he seeks to maintain a proper balance between "objective scholarship [and his] Jewish background." Here, as in his other books, he wants "to understand and thus portray Christianity with the measure of sympathy and critical admiration that is [his] genuine conviction."

The study begins with some "historical orientation" regarding the gradual rapprochement between Christians and Jews that began in the eighteenth century; in spite of occasional lapses, there was "the constantly growing and spreading conviction that religious freedom was a cornerstone of the modern spirit." That halcyon atmosphere was disturbed by the eastern European and Asian pogroms against the Jews in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; it was shattered by the Nazi "special bestiality" of the 1930s and early 1940s. A whole range of extremely serious questions arose regarding the hows and whys of nominal Christians doing such terrible things to Jews. Some attributed the origins of the tragedy "to the second or even the third Christian century . . . in order to exempt the New Testament itself." But the New Testament may indeed be "the source of and sanction for Christian hostility and contempt for the Jews"; indeed, perhaps anti-Semitism is "a permanent, unremovable aspect of Christianity." This book is an attempt to review exactly what is in the New Testament and ascertain why there is hostility in its pages, and to try to answer some of the questions that concern both Christians and Jews today.

The actual study follows the generally accepted chronological order of the New Testament writings, beginning with Paul's letters. Sandmel's opinion is that Paul certainly casts aspersions on historic Judaism, but that they are quite different from those that arise in the Gospel. Moving on to Mark's work, he concludes that it "is a tract on behalf of Gentile Christianity" that emphasizes the movement's "negative connections with the Judaism into which it had been born." Matthew's gospel seems to be an argument for "moral delinquency" among the Jewish leadership, which ought to be reason enough for the Jew to enter the Christian movement, "the authentic Judaism." Luke underscores "the fidelity of Jesus to Judaism and his innocence of any wrongdoing," i.e., no condemnation by "any valid Jewish authority." In Acts, Luke presents the Jews as "villains and their villainy could not be worse"; however, this may be mostly "a series of vilifications" and not an historical reflection. The Johannine gospel "reflects . . . one side of a *reciprocal bitterness*, a two-sided animosity." It is undeniably "a written compilation of clearly expressed anti-Jewish sentiments." The rest of the writings considered do not seem to Sandmel to be anti-semitic.

For Dr. Sandmel, the New Testament cannot be exempted from the charge of anti-semitism; "... its expression is to be found in Christian Scripture for all to read." The question is, then, "To what extent does Christianity in general, and the New Testament in particular, perpetuate and recapitulate the anti-Semitism that so many Christians have come to feel is unworthy of all that is so noble in their tradition?"

Some insight is provided by a review of "the unfortunate history that lies between New Testament times and the present." It also helps to confront

Some insight is provided by a review of "the unfortunate history that lies between New Testament times and the present." It also helps to confront the problem of whether Christian anti-Semitism after the New Testament era "[provided] the seedbed in which racial anti-Semitism could grow." The author states the case thus: "To what extent did the New Testament, read and preached in Christian worship, prompt or perpetuate the hostility to Jews that made Nazism possible?"

The author sums up his extensive studies and some of his pertinent personal experiences in a final chapter. He notes how a salutary change in American New Testament scholarship regarding Judaism and the Jews was brought about by George Foote Moore and others. He also notes that the resultant widespread warmth and cordiality among Christians and Jews in America presents a paradox, namely, that the New Testament provides the inspiration to nobility at the same time as it remains "a repository for hostility to Jews and Judaism." Many Christians rise above anti-Semitism, "but the presence of anti-Semitism in the New Testament is what presents the occasion for rising above it." The author believes "that once full recognition [of that fact] takes place and the will exists, the solution will be found. This generation of Jews and Christians, receptive to each other, has an opportunity for reconciliation that is without precedent."

Samuel Sandmel is Distinguished Service Professor of Bible and Hellenistic Literature at the Hebrew Union College, Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati, Ohio. He has written a number of books concerned with Jewish-Christian matters and has taught at the University of Chicago, Vanderbilt University, Windsor University (Canada), and others. He has been President of the predominantly Christian "Society of Biblical Literature." He served as a Navy chaplain in World War II (1942-46).

—WILLIAM E. PAUL, JR.

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## **Dreams: A Way To Listen To God**

**Morton Kelsey**

**Paulist Press, New York, NY; 1978**

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"Dreams not only reveal the stresses of the day past; they also reveal the forgotten depths of the human being and even give intimations of a spiritual world that surrounds the human being as totally as the physical one." The author of this little paperback (104 pages) is intent upon showing how to go about understanding one's dreams, stressing their religious value. He believes that this "can add a new vitality and a new dimension to the religious life of the ordinary human being."

Kelsey strongly believes that "dreams should be taken very seriously," as one means by which God seeks to contact us. It is pointed out that Jesus, like the prophets, believed that God reached out to human beings in terms of "visions, voices . . . , and other noteworthy happenings." Jesus also taught his followers to call God "Abba," the intimate family word for a father, and to seek God sincerely and silently. The modern Church, the author feels, is mostly no longer "a channel for humankind to experience the power of Christ," because of its secularization. He sees this as un-Christian and unscientific. "God still does break through into the lives of ordinary people, and we can perhaps best recognize this through the dream."

To underscore his point he relates three significant dream experiences of modern times: that of a Baptist minister, A.J. Gordon, in the late nineteenth century; another of John Newton, Anglican minister and hymn writer; and a third of Thérèse of Lisieux, a Catholic saint who died in 1927. The stories of these three are intimately connected to "powerful experiences by means of the dream."

The author's emphasis then shifts to "how every person today can experience the power of God through the dream if he or she is really open to this possibility." To that end he explores "a new view of the world," a second dimension of reality besides the physical. Attention is then given to "the role of the dream and its interpretation in the Bible and Church history." Finally there is examination of several "modern-day dreams that were important factors in the lives of the dreamers." He concludes that "Dreams and the understanding of them seem to be one way in which God pours out his love upon us and helps us become what we are capable of becoming."

An introduction to the subject of dreams from a religious viewpoint has value for chaplains, both in terms of their own experiences and in achieving some insight into the shared experiences of those with whom they counsel. The annotated reading list opens the way for further serious exploration of a fascinating and helpful subject.

Morton T. Kelsey is a prolific author, a poet, a psychologist—a student of C.G. Jung—a teacher for nearly twenty years, and an Episcopalian priest.

—WILLIAM E. PAUL, JR.

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### **Is Christ The End of The Law?**

**Gerard S. Sloyan**

**The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, PA; 1978.**

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"This learned and comprehensive study strikes a superb and rare balance between the meaning of grace and the meaning of moral responsibility. It should serve as a valuable corrective to the mindless 'do your own thing' dogma that has inflicted the latter part of the twentieth century. It also helps to put in perspective the biblical concept of grace, that reconciling, transforming power which is not merely taught in the New Testament but became incarnate in Jesus Christ." That is Howard Clark Kee's estimate of this paperback in the "Editor's Foreword."

Dr. Sloyan's "Introduction" raises a clutch of questions regarding the relationship between divine grace and the "covenant Law delivered to the Hebrew people," as well as how to view "the creation in the light of redemption, and vice versa." He regards the positions of the Christian church components—Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestants—to be "... sufficiently diverse [as well as] still at such odds with the Jewish teaching from which all derive, that a close examination of the Christian stance on law and grace and nature and grace seems very much in order." His book attempts to do this, with what is clearly considerable success.

The Jewish setting in "the Hebrew Scripture and other Jewish writings" is explored and the results summarized. There follows a close study of "The Law in the Teaching of Jesus" and a summary of the "essentials of Christian faith . . . found in the synoptic gospels." Yet another beautifully compact study, bearing the book's title as its heading, considers the epistles of Paul and "The indisputable facts for the life of the church that emerge . . ." from them; the similar study of the varied light shed "by some of the catholic or general epistles and by the gospel and epistles of John" follows. Then comes a survey of "the Greco-Roman world into which Christianity came," plus the patristic period. The final chapter presents "Implications for Contemporary Faith," summarized as "the serious and inescapable realities of Christian life and doctrine that have emerged from the exploration of [the] date in the foregoing pages . . ." Referenced notes to the chapters, a "Scripture Index," plus a "Subject and Author Index" are provided.

The book is one of a series entitled "Biblical Perspectives on Current Issues," edited by Howard Clark Kee. It is a noteworthy addition indeed, in every sense of the phrase. It confronts a serious reader with "something old, something new" in each chapter and thus stimulates critical thought so essential to substantive performance in the preaching/teaching ministry of the church. Chaplains, as a vital part of that ministry, need to read and ponder this book.



Gerard S. Sloyan, a Catholic priest, is Professor of New Testament Thought, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He received his Ph.D. at The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., and taught there for some time.

—WILLIAM E. PAUL, JR.

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## **Loving Says it All**

**Norman Pittenger**

**The Pilgrim Press, New York, NY; 1978**

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A distinguishing feature of the present era is the turmoil about ethics in our western culture. There is widespread unrest and disenchantment across the world regarding "the permissive society" or "open society," the apparent absence of "an ethically principled society." The term "Puritan backlash" has been coined, among others, to identify those who oppose the new freedoms. Old conventions are under attack and new principles are being put forward. The situation is, to say the least, confusing.

The same situation quite naturally also prevails in the realm of specifically *Christian* ethics. This book is primarily a contribution toward helping achieve some element of peace in that arena of conflict. It is "an attempt to open up and explore, in a suggestive fashion, some of the ethical implications of a Christian perspective understood in the light of process thought." For the author, "process" means that "God, the world, and humankind are taken to be in movement, dynamic rather than static, societal in nature, with 'becoming' given priority over 'being.' "

In seven chapters—a revised course of lectures given to a group in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1974—the author tries to "work through" the matter of "what contribution a Christian process attitude may make to the perennial problem of humanity's existence and behavior as ethical beings." He discusses "the ethical perspective itself," moves on to "how the Christian insistence on Love [as God's nature and humankind's intended nature] is related to this perspective"; he then considers "some of the consequences of this double view" and its implications "for ethical norms or principles." Succeeding chapters consider "the important question of 'absolute' and 'relative' in ethical matters; the place of 'situation' and 'context,' two recently proposed factors in all moral decision; and the practical application of [the] entire discussion," especially in regard to "human sexuality" and "social relationships such as those obtaining in political and economic life. . . . both taken as examples of a general way of looking at and working with the central norm of fulfillment in love of person in society."

Dr. Pittenger denies any intention of presenting his book as "an exhaustive or adequate discussion" of the matters involved; he emphasizes that his goal is "to open up and explore, in a suggestive fashion." Certainly he does that, and does it well. These pages present a mature Christian's "ethical stance" based on a "vision of the world, humankind, and God" in terms of his own Christian faith. Such a presentation cannot but help any Christian chaplain who must deal with the current ethical confusion; there is genuine value in comparing one's own position with that articulated by a thoughtful theologian with such warmth, humility, and insight.

Dr. William Norman Pittenger hardly needs extensive references to commend him to chaplains. Suffice it to say that he is now senior resident, King's College, Cambridge, England; he went to Cambridge in 1966, after some thirty-three years of teaching at the General Theological Seminary in New York City. He is author of over seventy books and is widely known in Europe, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, as well as the United States.

—WILLIAM E. PAUL, JR.

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## Happiness is a Choice

Frank B. Minirth and Paul D. Meier

Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI; 1978

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The subtitle of this unusual book is "A Manual on the Symptoms, Causes, and Cures of Depression." Dr. Paul Tournier, in his "Foreword," asserts that "Here is a book which will help all depressed individuals to better understand themselves and thus to contribute to their own recovery. But this book will also help those who are healthy to better understand the depressed. . . . This will in turn be favorable to the recovery of the depressed."

The authors share a conviction that the majority of humans "do *not* have the inner peace and joy" which they are capable of having, and which they may have simply by choosing and following "the right path to obtain it." Their book is an attempt to "summarize some of [the] complexities" of the problem in readily understandable language and present "guidelines, step by step, for obtaining lasting inner happiness" if the reader chooses that. "Two primary tasks" are noted, the larger of which is "to persuade the reader to give up his depression and choose happiness"; then, "the second task is to persuade the reader to commit his life to the *correct course* for obtaining inner love, happiness, and peace."

Part One of the book discusses in detail the nature of depression; Part Two, the causes of depression; Part Three, how depression can be overcome. There are three appendices regarding "Classification of Depression," "Case Studies of Depressed Individuals," and "Drugs and the Treatment of Depression." These are followed by the "Notes" for the various chapters, an "Index of Scripture," and a "General Index."

The authors offer the most lucid possible summary of their book on page 195: "There are no simple answers [to questions about human depression]. There is no single cause for all depressions, even though pent-up anger is the root cause of the vast majority of depressions. There is no single solution, even though faith in Jesus Christ and in the principles of God's Word is at the root of all the solutions [known and unknown]. The solutions may sometimes be very complex, but they do exist! Perhaps the future may bring some new, more rapid solutions. But even now, by applying the contents of this book, depression is 100 percent treatable. In fact, depression [over a period of weeks or months] is 100 percent curable. Indeed, *happiness is a choice!—Your choice!* "

The value of this book to chaplains, whether as a help in their own depressions or as an aid to understanding and dealing with depressed persons, is inestimable. The language is understandable, the evangelical/medical approach is valid, and the sheer volume of information included has a value all its own.

Both authors are Doctors of Medicine and maintain a private practice; both also serve as assistant professors in the pastoral ministries department of Dallas Theological Seminary. Both are authors of previous books in the psychiatric field. Dr. Meier is also chairman of the Department of Psychiatry, Richardson Medical Center, Richardson, Texas.

—WILLIAM E. PAUL, JR.

# INDEX

The following index includes all entries from Volume 1, Number 1, through DA Pam 165-120 (Winter 1979). Issues published in 1972 and 1973 were designated by volume and number. Since 1974, they have been numbered sequentially as the DA Pamphlet 165 series. References cited are by volume, number, and page, or by DA Pam number and page. For example, "V1, N2, 43" indicates "Volume 1, Number 2, page 43," while "118, 33" indicates DA Pamphlet 165-118, page 33." The designation *a/* indicates the entire issue. (This index is updated annually in each Spring edition.)

## AUTHOR INDEX

Ackermann, Ch. Henry F.	118, 53
Adickes, Ch. Donald K.	119, 13
Alexander, Ch. George W.	V2, N3, 45
Alexander, Ch. Harold L.	114, 1
Allen, Ch. Eugene E.	109, 17
	111, 53
Ammerman, Ch. E.H.	113, 91
Anderson, Ch. Allister C.	V1, N2, 31
Atwood, Dr. Bertram DeH.	111, 65
Autry, Ch. Jerry D.	105, 18
Baily, BG Mildred C.	106, 45
Baker, MG George I.	115, 47
Barber, LTC Don W.	120, 107
Baroni, Msgr. Gene C.	V1, N4, 20
Bass, Ch. Charles D.	V2, N4, 19
Bell, Ch. Arthur F.	V2, N4, 19
Bellwood, Dr. Lester R.	V2, N4, 10
Berger, Dr. Peter	112, 79
Bertocci, Dr. Peter A.	110, 20
Bichsel, Dr. Alfred M.	100, 47
Bickley, Ch. Hugh J.	103, 38
Biersdorf, Dr. John E.	107, 43
Blustein, Ch. Alan M.	116, 75
Bonnot, Ch. Bernard R.	117, 1
Boyce, Ch. David G.	107, 27
	110, 1
	116, 1
Brandt, Ch. Richard A.	120, 113
Braun, MAJ Bennett G.	V2, N4, 10
Brayer, Dr. Menachem M.	119, 57
Breland, Ch. Don C.	120, 59
Brewer, Dr. Earl D.C.	116, 59
Brinsfield, Ch. John W.	102, 35
Brizee, MAJ Harold R.	108, 75

Brooks, COL Leo A.	115, 19
Brooks, Ch. Porter H.	V2, N2, 9
Brown, Ch. Allen, Jr.	108, 61
Browne, Ch. Clinton E.	110, 51
Brummitt, Ch. Malcolm J.	117, 79
Burke, Dr. John	101, 7
Burttram, Ch. Danny W.	104, 43
Calian, Dr. Carnegie Samuel	114, 95
Capitani, Ch. Anthony L.	V1, N2, 19
Casdorph, Dr. H. Richard	113, 63
Clinebell, Dr. Howard J., Jr.	V1, N3, 1
Cobb, Ch. Ronald Lee	120, 37
Conrad, Ch. Michael F.	119, 37
Costello, Gwen	119, 95
Costello, Richard	119, 95
Coulter, Ch. David C.	109, 93
Countes, Ch. Robert H.	111, 29
Covert, Mr. Norman M.	115, 31
Cox, Mrs. Delle	106, 54
Crick, Ch. Robert D.	V1, N2, 53
	113, 97
Curry, BG Jerry R.	113, 55
Daughton, Ms. Sandy	106, 33
Davidson, Ch. Neal R.	102, 11
David, Ch. Donald R.	118, 85
David, MAJ James R.	120, 83
David, Susan	120, 83
Davies, Ch. Richard E.	117, 23
Davis, Dr. C. Anne	106, 77
Davis, Ch. Donald R.	114, 49
Deal, Ch. Thomas L.	113, 23
DeVeaux, Ch. John A., Jr.	V1, N1, 19
Dulaney, Ch. Joseph P.	108, 32
Dunaway, Ch. William C.	117, 59
Duncan, Sister Rosemary	116, 49
Duncan, Mr. Tommie L.	V1, N2, 7
Dyba, Ch. Anthony	118, 59
Eakin, Ms. Joann N.	110, 92
Edmonson, Ch. James H.	108, 46
Edwards, Dr. Herbert O.	110, 41
Evans, M. Norene R.	115, 61
Fant, Dr. Clyde E.	101, 15
Fernlund, Ch. Calvin E.	105, 27
Fichter, Rev. Joseph H.	112, 39
Fischer, Dr. Clare B.	106, 55
	110, 92
Fletcher, Dr. John C.	102, 1
Flower, Ch. Edward E., Jr.	V2, N4, 41
Foreman, Mrs. Elaine W.	111, 15
Friesen, Ch. Eugene W.	108, 23
Furgeson, Dr. Earl H.	V1, N3, 53

Galle, Ch. Joseph E., III	V2, N4, 60 102, 26 111, 1 118, 11
Galloway, COL Katherine F.	115, 41
Garrison, Ch. Raymond A.	108, 15
Gatti, Rev. Daniel J.	109, 52
Gilbert, Ch. Bertram C.	V1, N2, 48 V2, N1, 38
Gnewach, Ch. Donald E.	109, 65
Grenz, Ch. Clinton E.	V1, N3, 31
Groen, Ch. Douglas J.	V1, N2, 53
Grollman, Dr. Earl A.	109, 33
G'Segner, Ch. Ford F.	107, 43
Haines, GEN Ralph E., Jr.	113, 11
Hambrick, Ch. David C., Jr.	113, 83
Harayda, Janice	119, 47
Harris, Ch. Thomas A.	V1, N2, 1 V1, N3, 21
Hedrick, Ch. Charles W.	120, 1
Henderson, Dr. J. Frank	115, 75
Herrera, Dr. Marina	119, 73
Hess, Ch. Robert S.	104, 13
Hester, Dr. Richard L.	114, 21
Hicks, Ch. H. Harrell	112, 25
Hill, Ch. Thomas M.	112, 65
Hogan, Dr. Robert	100, 38
Hoogland, Mrs. Alma L.	V2, N4, 29
Hughes, Ch. William J.	118, 97
Hulme, Ch. John W.	V1, N4, 52
Hutcheson, Dr. Richard G.	110, 77
Hyatt, Ch. Gerhardt W.	V2, N2, 1 105, 1
Irwin, SP4 Edwin F.	115, 11
Jackson, Dr. B. F.	107, 7
Jackson, Dr. Douglas E.	V1, N4, 1
Jaeger, Ch. James	109, 43
Jensen, Dr. Richard A.	113, 1
Johnson, Ch. Richard A.	109, 99
Johnson, Ch. Richard H.	117, 35
Johnson, Dr. Vernon E.	112, 31
Jones, Dr. Joyce C.	103, 52
Kapusta, Ch. Emil F.	V1, N4, 47
Kelly, Ch. Colin P.	118, 21
Kildahl, Dr. John P.	113, 35
Killinger, Dr. John	107, 1 110, 61
King, Ch. Carl S.	104, 35
King, Ch. Wayne C.	118, 45
Kinlaw, Ch. Dennis C.	107, 63

Lapp, Ch. Ernest D.	V2, N2, 42
Lifton, Dr. Robert Jay	116, 15
Lindsey, Ch. Chester R.	V1, N2, 43
Little, Dr. David	100, 1
Little, Dr. Sara	119, 27
Lobo, Rev. Anthony F.	117, 41
MacIndoe, COL John W.	115, 69
Marthaler, Dr. Berard L.	119, 83
Mathis, Ch. Roy N.	118, 89
McCollough, Ch. Mark M.	117, 9
	120, 19
McSwain, Ch. Donald W.	V2, N3, 13
Mehl, Dr. Duane P.	112, 51
Mill, Dr. Cyril R.	V2, N1, 22
Miller, Sr. Janet	119, 19
Mitchell, Dr. Henry H.	V1, N1, 1
Mitchell, Dr. Kenneth R.	109, 23
Mole, Ch. Robert L.	V2, N2, 9
Moore, Bishop Paul, Jr.	116, 37
Morelli, COL Donald R.	115, 25
Mulder, Dr. John M.	111, 35
Neshim, Ch. Vaughn R.	107, 31
Nichols, Dr. J. Randall	101, 23
Noble, Ch. William C.	112, 21
Nuscher, Ch. Max E.	117, 93
O'Laughlin, Ch. Stanley, Jr.	108, 75
Parker, Dr. James H.	114, 39
Parker, Mr. Thomas O.	103, 8
Pearce, Ch. Arthur J.	V2, N2, 35
Pearson, Ch. John C.	104, 23
	118, 77
Pearson, Ch. Robert L.	118, 27
Pendergraff, Ch. Isaac B.	109, 38
Peck, Dr. Robert F.	V2, N2, 30
Pfaff, Ch. Richard A.	118, 65
Phelps, Ch. Paul E.	108, 69
Pierotti, Rev. Daniel L.	V1, N4, 33
Poage, Ch. Ben	108, 55
Pohl, Mr. Frederik	110, 8
Pohlman, Ch. F. Diana	106, 20
Polhemus, Ch. David W.	V2, N2, 37
Pratt, Ch. Glenn R.	102, 46
	109, 53
Raines, Dr. John C.	111, 21
Ramsey, Dr. Paul	V2, N1, 8
Randolph, Dr. David J.	101, 32
Rasmussen, Ch. John A.	114, 79
Ray, Dr. Oakley S.	101, 44
Reed, Ch. John H.	V2, N3, 1
Ricciuti, Rev. Gail A.	106, 10
Rice, Dr. Charles	120, 11

Richardson, Ch. Frank D.	107, 53 108, 1 111, 45 120, 75
Rivers, Rev. Clarence J.	V1, N1, 43 103, 18
Roat, Ch. Stanley G.	114, 33
Roberson, Ch. Henry P.	114, 71
Roberts, Ch. Archie T.	105, 58
Robinson, Ch. James C.	114, 59
Rogers, GEN Bernard W.	115, 1
Rogers, Ch. Melvin L.	120, 47
Rooks, Dr. Charles S.	V2, N2, 20
Rosenbluh, Mr. Harry G.	115, 53
Russell, Dr. Letty M.	106, 1
Sandrow, Dr. Edward T.	105, 47
Saunders, Ch. Robert E.	117, 53
Scanlan, Rev. Michael	113, 47
Schall, Rev. James V.	116, 97
Schreck, Ch. Thomas	117, 69
Schuckit, Dr. Marc A.	112, 9
Schumacher, Ch. John W.	111, 45
Schweitzer, Ch. Gordon M.	105, 22
Scott, Dr. Manuel L.	101, 1
Sensenbrenner, Ch. Edward W.	105, 29
Shannon, Ch. Sylvester L.	V1, N1, 51
Shinn, Dr. Roger L.	100, 67
Shockley, Dr. Grant S.	V1, N2, 13 116, 27
Sixty, CPT Gordon W.	102, 21
Slenk, Dr. Howard J.	103, 1
Smith, Ch. Benjamin E.	V1, N3, 13
Smith, Mr. Martin L.	110, 86
Smith, Ch. Wilford E.	V2, N1, 54 102, 39 110, 28
Snyder, COL Quay C.	115, 5
Speitel, Ch. Edmond J.	111, 7 114, 7
Standley, Ch. Meredith R.	V2, N2, 30
Staudt, The Hon. Herman R.	104, 1
Stephens, Ch. Carl R.	V2, N3, 27 V2, N4, 1 117, 17 120, 29
Stinnette, Dr. Charles R.	V1, N3, 35
Swyter, Ms. Jai	109, 1
Tatum, Ch. Timothy C.	116, 89
Thomas, Rev. George B.	119, 67
Twynham, Mr. Robert	103, 25
Ufema, Ms. Joy	109, 9

Vaughan, Ch. Curry N., Jr.	113, 75
Vernon, Dr. Glenn M.	109, 73
Waldrop, Marguerite I.	119, 19
Warne, Ch. Thomas M.	104, 9
	105, 35
	117, 85
Weber, Dr. Theodore R.	100, 17
Welsh, Ch. Donald H.	109, 85
Westfield, Ch. Arnold D.	118, 37
White, Ch. Phil	120, 67
Wicker, Ch. R. Fenton, Jr.	V2, N4, 48
Wilke, Dr. Harold H.	V1, N4, 24
Witmer, Ch. Charles Daniel	120, 95
Wright, Ch. Wendell T.	V2, N1, 31
	107, 69
	116, 7
Wyckoff, Dr. D. Campbell	119, 1
Zappone, Katherine E.	119, 105
Zylman, Mr. Richard	112, 1

## SUBJECT INDEX

ALCOHOL (see Drug and Alcohol)

AUDIO VISUALS (see also MASS MEDIA):

Use of by Chaplain 107, 27

BLACK MUSLIMS:

And the Chaplain V2, N3, 35

CHAPLAIN (see also RESERVE CHAPLAIN):

Administrative	105, 27
Alcohol Abuse and	112, <i>al</i>
Blacks and	V1, N1, <i>al</i>
	V2, N2, 20
	V2, N3, 35
Challenge of	115, 1
Changing Concept of	V2, N1, 22
Charismatic	113, 23
Chief of	118, 1
Circuit Rider	118, 59
Clinical Theologian	105, 35
Collegiality	107, 63
	102, 26
Confinement	108, 75
	118, 45
Consultation and	108, 23
Credibility	107, 7
Death and	109, <i>al</i>



Domestic Civil Action and	108, 55
Domestic Crises	105, 58
Expectations of	104, 9
	115, <i>al</i>
Faith of	105, 1
Funerals and	V2, N2, 9
Future	110, <i>al</i>
	116, <i>al</i>
History	V2, N1, 38
	V2, N2, 42
	102, 35
Hospital	105, 52
	118, 77
Industrial	V1, N3, 31
	115, 19
Isolated assignments and	118, 11
	118, 85
Jewish, History of	V2, N2, 42
Look at	105, 6
Moral Role of	117, 1
Muslim Servicemen and	108, 32
Pastor	V2, N2, 1
	105, 22
Promotion Passover	117, 35
Prophetic Ministry	120, 19
	120, 29
Role of	V1, N3, 21
Service School and	105, 18
Social Concerns and	V1, N4, 47
Special Ministries of	118, <i>al</i>
 CHARISMATICS:	
"The Charismatics"	113, <i>al</i>
 CHILDREN (see also YOUTH):	
Abuse of	118, 97
Death and	109, 33
	109, 43
Exceptional	118, 27
Mobility and	111, 15
 CLINICAL PASTORAL EDUCATION:	
Army Health Care and	V2, N3, 27
	115, 47
Jewish view of	114, 89
"Parable of C. P. Evans"	114, 1
Philosophy and Experience	V1, N2, 31
Psychologist as Consultant	102, 21
 CONFINEMENT (see PRISON)	
 COUNSELING:	
Alcoholics	112, <i>al</i>
Amputee	V2, N3, 13
Bible Stories and	114, 33

Contemporary Media and	107, 31
Covenant Groups	117, 69
Dying	V2, N4, 1
	109, <i>al</i>
Grief	104, 43
Guidelines	V2, N4, 48
Marginal Soldier	V2, N3, 1
"Messy" lives	120, 113
Peer Help	120, 75
Privileged Communication	120, 67
Rational	114, 49
	118, 85
"Temple Walking"	114, 59
 DEATH AND DYING:	
Cautions in Discussing	117, 59
"Death and Dying"	109, <i>al</i>
Dying, counseling of	V2, N4, 1
Grief	104, 43
 DRUG AND ALCOHOL:	
"Alcohol Abuse"	112, <i>al</i>
Counseling	V1, N2, 19
Ministry	V1, N3, 13
"People Helping People"	V2, N4, 10
Problems	V1, N2, 7
Prevention	108, 61
Psychiatric Traits	V1, N2, 19
 EDUCATION (see also RELIGIOUS EDUCATION and VALUE EDUCATION):	
Future of	110, 51
Mobility and	111, 15
 EQUAL RIGHTS (see HUMAN POTENTIAL)	
 ETHICS:	
American	110, 20
Barth, Karl	120, 47
Conscientious Objection	V2, N1, 54
	108, 38
"Ethics"	100, <i>al</i>
Hospital	114, 79
Judeo-Christian	104, 13
Kohlberg, Lawrence	119, 105
Military Service	V2, N1, 8
Moral Role	117, 1
Reasonable	117, 79
 FAMILY (see also CHILDREN):	
Death in	109, 43
	109, 93
Marital Sexuality	120, 83
Marriage Preparation	111, 45

FUTURE:	
"Future Ministries"	116, <i>al</i>
"Horizons"	110, <i>al</i>
HANDICAP:	
Deaf	118, 65
Exceptional Child	118, 27
HEALING (see also CHARISMATICS):	
Advocacy in	116, 15
Pastoral Role in	105, 52
	114, 79
	115, 41
	115, 47
HISPANIC:	
In Church	119, 73
HISTORY:	
Church and Roman Military	117, 23
"Continuing Revolution"	111, 35
Jewish Chaplain	V2, N2, 42
Nonviolence in	110, 86
Race Relations	V2, N4, 19
HUMAN POTENTIAL:	
"Human Potential"	106, <i>al</i>
Liberation at home	111, 1
Women's Liberation	V2, N4, 29
HUMAN RELATIONS:	
Asian Wives	108, 1
Future of	110, 41
History	V2, N4, 19
Pluralism	116, 27
Racial Awareness	104, 35
Racism	V2, N3, 45
Trans. Analysis	V2, N4, 41
HUMAN SELF DEVELOPMENT:	
Communication in	107, 53
Model of	V1, N2, 53
Programs	108, 69
	V1, N2, 49
Values Clarification in	107, 48
KOREA:	
"Korean Connection"	118, 11
LAITY:	
"Views From the Laity"	115, <i>al</i>
LITURGY:	
Kiss of Peace	114, 7
Music as	103, 1
Search for Personal	111, 7

<b>MANAGEMENT:</b>	
Communication in	107, 69
Of Change	110, 1
Of Intangibles	104, 1
Ministry of	120, 59
<b>MARRIAGE (see FAMILY)</b>	
<b>MASS MEDIA (see also AUDIO VISUAL):</b>	
Opportunity of	118, 53
<b>MILITARY:</b>	
Alcohol and	112, <i>al</i>
Charismatics and	113, <i>al</i>
Death and	109, <i>al</i>
Draft	114, 71
Early Church and	117, 23
<b>MUSIC:</b>	
"Ministry of Music"	103, <i>al</i>
<b>ORGANIZATIONS:</b>	
Ministry to Systems	117, 9
	117, 17
Prophetic Ministry	120, 19
	120, 29
<b>PARISH COUNSEL:</b>	
"Untapped Power"	115, 25
<b>PREACHING:</b>	
Beginnings	V2, N1, 1
Black	V1, N1, 1
Chaplain	117, 93
Comes Alive	117, 85
Critique of	115, 61
	115, 75
Excellence in	120, 1
"Homiletics"	101, <i>al</i>
Imagination in	V2, N4, 60
Innovative	102, 11
Language of	107, 13
Parable of	114, 1
Today	V1, N3, 53
	120, 11
<b>PRISON:</b>	
Ministry in	118, 45
<b>PSYCHOLOGY (see also COUNSELING and CLINICAL PASTORAL EDUCATION):</b>	
Charismatics and	113, 35
<b>RACE (see BLACK MUSLIM; HISPANIC; HUMAN RELATIONS)</b>	

RELEVANCE:		
A cop-out		101, 44
RELIGION (RELIGIOUS):		
Modes of Becoming		V1, N3, 35
Russian		120, 37
Views of Jefferson		V2, N1, 38
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:		
"Religious Education"		119, <i>al</i>
Small Groups and		102, 46
RESERVE (USAR) CHAPLAIN:		
Active Duty Training		108, 46
Mission and Functions		V1, N2, 59
		105, 29
		118, 37
RETIREMENT:		
Ministry to Retired		115, 69
SACRAMENTS:		
Jesus in		113, 47
SOCIAL CONCERNS:		
Alcoholism		112, <i>al</i>
Alienation and Identity		V1, N4, 20
American Dream		111, 21
Community Problems		V1, N4, 1
Domestic Crises		105, 58
Dying		109, <i>al</i>
Endorsing Agencies and		V1, N4, 24
Meaning in Society		114, 39
Mission Strategy		V1, N4, 33
Pluralism		102, 39
		116, 27
Societal Trends		116, 7
Vital Issues		V1, N4, 52
SPIRITUAL RENEWAL (see CHARISMATICS)		
SYSTEMS (see ORGANIZATIONS and MANAGEMENT)		
TEAM MINISTRY:		
In Hospital		117, 53
In Military Community		117, 41
Peer Help		120, 75
Voluntarism in Care		114, 21
THEOLOGY:		
Charismatic		113, 1
Inferential		111, 29
Personal		111, 53
TRAINING:		
Personal Effectiveness		120, 95
		120, 107

“Seven Echo”	118, 89
US ARMY CHAPLAIN SCHOOL:	
Advanced Course	V1, N2, 43
VALUE EDUCATION:	
Ethical Theory and	100, 17
History of	V1, N2, 49
Human Self Development	107, 43
Officers and	V2, N2, 30
WEST POINT:	
Ministry at	118, 21
WOMEN (see HUMAN POTENTIAL):	
Pastor’s Wife	114, 95
WORSHIP (see also LITURGY; PREACHING; MUSIC):	
Black	V1, N1, 1 V1, N1, 51 V1, N2, 13 103, 18 104, 23
Christian Faith and Participation in	101, 32 V1, N1, 19
YOUTH (see also CHILDREN):	
Black	V1, N1, 35
Young Adults	V1, N1, 51 119, 47 119, 95

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10

11

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14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

39

40

41

42

43

44

45

46

47

48

49

50

51

52

53







